The WET PARADE

UPTON SINCLAIR

THE WET PARADE

BOOKS BY

Upton Sinclair

THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING
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THE JUNGLE
THE OVERMAN
THE MILLENNIUM
THE METROPOLIS
THE MONEYCHANGERS
SAMUEL, THE SEEKER
THE FASTING CURE
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BOSTON
MOUNTAIN CITY
MENTAL RADIO
ROMAN HOLIDAY
THE WET PARADE

Plays

PRINCE HAGEN
THE NATUREWOMAN
THE SECOND STORY MAN
THE MACHINE
THE POT-BOILER
HELL
SINGING JAILBIRDS
BILL PORTER
OIL (DRAMATIZATION)

THE WET PARADE

UPTON SINCLAIR

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THE WET PARADE

CHAPTER ONE · · *POINTE CHILCOTE*

I

THE visitor from the North sat and fanned herself vigorously with a palm-leaf fan; she was not used to such temperatures, even in midsummer. But Mama did not mind it, having lived here all her forty-odd years; she was stout and placid, and sat and rocked slowly, with perspiration running in streams down her pink and white cheeks. She knew it was good for you to be bathed in perspiration, provided you bathed in water morning and evening, and used talcum powder meantime, and put on fresh linen. She explained this to the anxious stranger, and added, apologetically, "We cannot open the doors just now, because there is a snake in the house."

The visitor started visibly. "A snake?"

"Yes," said Mama; "one gets in every now and then, you know."

"And what do you do about it?"

"Well, you see, he gets hidden; but sooner or later he has to come out, and then we kill him with a stick."

The strange lady cast uneasy glances around the drawing-room, and furtively began to gather up her skirts and tuck them tightly about her ankles—this being in the days before skirts got out of the reach of ankles and snakes. "Why don't you keep the doors open, and let him go out?" she quavered.

"But then we wouldn't know he was gone," explained Mama, amiably. "We have to keep track of him."

"Are they poisonous, Mrs. Chilcote?"

"Unfortunately, yes—they're generally moccasins."

"Good gracious me!" said the lady from the North, and arose from her chair, saying that she just must hurry along, as she had another engagement, and was already late. Mama detained her, in the Southern way of hospitality, but the lady from the North never stopped edging herself towards the front door, meanwhile gazing about at the floor of the drawing-room, which was kept in semi-

darkness all day, and had antique rugs with snaky patterns, and carved mahogany furniture with snaky-looking legs.

Maggie May was over by one of the windows, on the other side of the curtains, supposed to be reading a story-book when this conversation took place. After the visiting lady had gone, she and Mama laughed over the hurriedness of the departure, and lack of social tact displayed. Northern people were always funny to Maggie May and her mother; they didn't understand about things, and asked such unexpected questions. How could anybody imagine that you could grow sugar without snakes? In the black ooze of the bottom-lands where thickets of tall cane grew, the roots made such a tangle, you might as well have thought of getting rid of mosquitoes as of reptiles. Maggie May was used to all such natural superfluities. Just as you always carried with you outdoors a little bundle of twigs with leaves to keep the mosquitoes off your ankles, and always knocked them from your nightdress before you crawled into bed under the "mosquito bar"—so also you had to turn your shoes upside down before you put your feet into them, and you never reached into a dark hole for anything.

The danger was reduced by the fact that outside the house Papa would not permit shrubbery or plants, only a smooth lawn upon which snakes were easy to see; he would then get his rifle and sit on the front gallery and shoot their heads off. Once a week he would send a Negro man under the house to look for nests, and one of the fascinations of Maggie May's childhood was holding in her hands and examining against the light certain round yellow objects, soft to pressure and leathery, shaped like the capsules which the doctor gave you when you developed chills and fever. You must not leave them to stand very long, or when you came back you might find a box-full of baby snakes, perhaps as deadly as their mothers and fathers. When Papa had the man build a fire of brush and set such a box in the middle of it, the little girl tried to look into the writhing mass of red and yellow flames, mingled with black and brown serpents, and had to turn her head away, because life was so awful—and yet so fascinating, one could not get away from it!

II

It was the sugar-cane country of Louisiana, the "Bayou Teche." For no one could say how many thousands of years the Father of Waters had gathered the detritus of half a continent, and swept it

down here, and spread it, black and slimy, to a depth beyond all digging. It lay under a blazing sun, watered by floods and rains, and a forest of green things sprang into life in it overnight, and men labored all their lives, black men with their muscles and white men with their minds, to tame this growth and limit it to useful things.

Strange as it seemed when you said it, a considerable part of the land was water. The wild cane and marsh-grass were many feet high, and their roots made such a tangle that you would think you could walk on it. Only when you went to the edge of the road and looked directly down you would see the ooze and slime. It was half brackish from the gulf, but this did not keep it from breeding insects, which rose in clouds so thick that they would dim the sun. The roads had to be made with logs laid crossways, and then loads of dirt dumped onto them, and then perhaps a second layer of logs. It was all part of the cost of sugar.

Maggie May's family lived on what was known as Pointe Chilcote. In far-off years it had been a real "pointe" thrust out into the gulf; but now the marsh had enveloped it, and it looked like the rest, except that it had "hills" here and there, not so many feet high, but solid enough to have live oaks and magnolias growing on them. "Pointe Chilcote" was eight miles long and three miles wide, domain enough for a family to spread itself upon. Like all other planters, Grandpa Chilcote had been ruined by the Civil War, but he had not had to lose his land and come down in the social scale, because there had been discovered a salt mine upon his place. So the estates were built up again, and the burned mansion replaced by an even more splendid one. Now there were four sons, and two married daughters, each with a home on a separate "hill," half a mile or so apart; as grandsons and daughters grew up, they moved to yet other "hills," or bought themselves homes in the towns, where they lived in winter.

When the visitor from the North descended from the train at the town of Acadia, he found a conveyance of the Chilcotes waiting, with a Negro in black livery, no matter how hot the day. In Maggie May's early childhood this had been a barouche or victoria, with a pair of what were referred to as "spanking bays"; the families were conservative, distrustful of those newfangled things called "horseless carriages." But one day Uncle Daubney, the youngest son and the wildest, turned up in a terrifying contraption which he had driven from New Orleans, known as a "White Steamer." It was

made by a man named White, and was painted white, and it ran by steam, leaving a long white trail behind. It made a powerful noise, and drove a score of the delta horses to leap into the marsh; finally, one ill-fated day, it exploded with a tremendous roar, and deposited Uncle Daubney in a clump of his own sugar-cane.

The horses took you through what appeared to be a Malayan jungle, and if you had never been in this country before, you might be anxious as to what sort of accommodation you would find. But suddenly the brakes and marshes would fade away; the land would begin to rise, and there would appear fine stretches of lawn, with peacocks and lyre-birds strutting about under the shade of trees older than anyone's memory. In the distance, down the gravelled driveway, you saw a mansion made of red brick, two stories high, with fluted white columns going to the second story, and a double "gallery," one on the ground floor and one on the second. There were eighteen of these columns along the front of the house, each so big that the biggest man could not put his arms around it. The Negro men who came for your bags wore white duck, and the maids who unpacked them wore black dresses with white aprons and caps; so you would realize that you had been transported, not in space to Malaya, but in time to the "Old South."

III

In the daytime the Chilcote men wore khaki, with riding-boots and broad hats, and rode the plantations on horseback. But at six in the evening everybody disappeared, and an hour later appeared for dinner in tuxedos and evening gowns, as fashionable as you would see in New Orleans. There was a dining-room panelled in mahogany, with sideboards and highboys elaborately carved with roses and deer's heads, and the faces of Roman emperors and French duchesses. There was hand-cut crystal, and silver dishes, platters almost too heavy for one man, and coffee-urns and punch-bowls shining like full moons in a midnight sky; an array of silver decanters with several kinds of liquor, and silver bowls for ice, and holders for wine-bottles. There was a special servant for these treasures, a grey-headed old Negro called the "steward," who had the keys to cabinets and sideboards, and served the liquors at meals.

You would want much cold drink, for not merely was the weather hot, but also the food; it was the land of peppers and tabasco. Not far from the Chilcotes was a neighbor who had become wealthy

through the manufacture of a fiery hot sauce which was used all over the world. You would be served a rich soup, made of what the Negroes called "tarpin"; or perhaps, still richer, of the soft green turtle, whose shell was meat, cut up in little chunks; with that would come a decanter of sherry, and you would pour in all you wanted. Then would come a sherbet to cool your throat, and after it a "gumbo," or chowder, made of fish, or crabs, or shrimp, peppered so that if you were not used to it the tears would come into your eyes, and you would be glad when the "steward" came with a bottle of ice-cold claret. After you had recovered, you would be served a "crawfish bisque," or a platter of crabs with the big claws cracked for you. A messy business eating them with your fingers; the "Creole" families, the descendants of the old-time French and Spanish settlers, had special lavatories adjoining the dining-room, one for ladies and one for gentlemen, to which all retired after the crab-course, and washed their hands and cheeks before resuming the meal.

You were not considered really to have dined until you had venison, or perhaps bear-meat, or wild turkey; or half a dozen guinea-hens off the plantation, or ducks fed on pecans and stuffed with them. There would be a huge cold ham, carved in slices, even though nobody took any. There would be six or eight vegetables, smoking hot, with rich cream sauces, and cold champagne to cool your mouth, and then "ambrosia," made of orange and grated cocoanut, or "syllabub," a cream whip with sherry, poured over "angle cake"; then fruit, and coffee, with brandy which you burned on top.

That was the way they ate in the "Old South" or Slave days, and it was a form of glory to keep up the ritual, even to the twentieth century, when newspapers and magazines were full of the writings of "diet cranks." The elder Chicotes took no stock in any sort of "cranks," but continued to live "like gentlemen," whether they had guests or were alone. Not much was wasted, because there was a swarm of servants, and in the cabins on the edge of the clearing many dependents waiting hungrily.

While they ate, the Chilcotes talked decorously and gravely about the viands, their qualities and the methods of preparing them: the difference between Smithfield and other hams; between Lynnhaven Bay and Gulf oysters; between diamond-backed terrapin and those without markings; the vintage of wines and the advantages of dry or sweet; the superiority of Bourbon rye aged in the wood, and the

impossibility of eliminating fusel oil by any other means. It would be said that the turkey had been shot by Tom's Joe; the angel cake had been made according to Sally's recipe, and how did it compare with Molly's?

They talked about the affairs of the family, where this one was visiting, and what that one was suffering, and what Dr. Aloysius had said about his progress. If there were guests present, the interests would be broadened; they would talk about mutual friends in New Orleans and Memphis society; where So-and-so's boy was going to college, and whom So-and-so's daughter was engaged to. The mention of an engagement might provide conversation for half an hour, because everyone would be interested to recall the connections of that family—the grandson of General Somebody, who had surrendered to Grant at Vicksburg, or had helped Jefferson Davis win the battle of Buena Vista. There would be the Virginia connections, and the Tennessee connections, and the fact that one son was studying art in Paris. Before you knew it, you would be talking about the depravity of French fashions; or perhaps about the French opera company which was expected in New Orleans in the fall.

Such was the method of education of Maggie May in her childhood. As soon as she was old enough to eat politely, she sat at meals with the grown-ups, a demure, silent little figure with big dark eyes that watched everything, and ears that missed no word. She learned the names of an army of persons, living and dead, their connections endlessly complicated, their occupations, their reputations, the names of towns or cities where they lived, and of the plantations or businesses that made them rich and important. When, now and then, one of these persons turned up as a guest in the home, it was as if Napoleon or Julius Caesar had stepped out of a history-book and shaken hands with her.

IV

The biggest house was that of Grandpa; it had the finest plate, and served the most elaborate banquets with the oldest wines. Colonel Chilcote was a civil war veteran, in his seventies when Maggie May first remembered him. He was stout, but still insisted on riding his own plantations, and travelled to New Orleans and transacted his business, and was a favorite in all the clubs. He claimed to carry more good liquor than any other man he knew.

He had been a widower for a number of years, and there was always some lively young widow or even a debutante in fashionable society "setting her cap" at him. "The Colonel," a rosy old gentleman with a keen sense of humor, had worked out a novel method of controlling his sons and daughters. Whatever it might be—whether one of the sons spent too much time away from home, or one of the daughters declared she could no longer put up with her hard-drinking husband—the Colonel would only have to say that he was feeling lonely in his old age, and was going to console himself with whatever charmer happened to be conspicuous in the family fears at that moment.

"Papa" was Roger Chilcote, the oldest of the sons, and Maggie May was the youngest of his children. Papa was in his forties when she was a little girl, and to her he was without a blemish, a creature wholly divine. He was blond, with golden hair which developed beautiful waves; he wore a soft, golden beard trimmed to a little point, which made him look romantic. He had a gentle voice, with tremolo stops which caused thrills to run up and down the child's spine; he would take her on his knees and tell her stories out of mythologies white or black. He was a highly sentimental person, tenderhearted, and unable to stand the sight of cruelty; for this reason he was ill-fitted to the world in which fate had placed him.

There had been a tragedy in the life of Roger Chilcote, of which Maggie May knew nothing until she was grown up. He had been engaged to a Creole beauty of Mobile, a dashing creature who rode wild horses and broke all hearts in her neighborhood. She and Roger fell "madly in love," as people in that country liked to phrase it, and it was an ideal match, according to the world of the delta. But as fate willed it, a sister of this brilliant girl was married first, and in due course was delivered of an infant, and the horrified whisper went the rounds of society—this infant was black! It is something which happens now and then in the far South, and to the victims it is a jest of Satan; the infant is turned over to a Negro servant, and a curse is laid upon that family to the end of time. The wealthy Creoles sold their possessions and took a steamer to France—and on the way Roger Chilcote's beloved stepped over the side of the vessel.

He never recovered from it; when he took another bride, it was to please his parents. Mama was their choice, and she went into the marriage knowing that she would have the affection and respect

of her husband, but no more than that. Mama's duty had been to bear children for the Chilcotes, and this she had faithfully done. There were five of them alive; two more had succumbed to the dangers of the climate, and one had miscarried when a runaway saddle-horse had thrown the young wife over its head. Mama was gentle and placid, endlessly kind, a soft lap and a warm bosom. There were two kinds of mothers in that Old South—those who wore themselves to string and bones, managing households and saving the members from destruction; and those who gave up, and sat in arm-chairs and rocked, while things took their own painful course.

V

Maggie May was trained from earliest childhood to fear. Impossible to be trained any other way, in the midst of high-spirited horses which might kick you, and cows which might swing at you with their horns, and deadly snakes which might be lurking in the places where you played. There was a story they told of one of her brothers, a little fellow who had been overlooked by a careless servant, and had crawled under the house, and there amused himself poking his finger at a funny creature which poked back with long red needles; finally the child crawled out again, and told his mother about this fascinating play.

So many "don'ts" for a little girl! She must not go barefoot, because it would make her feet big; she must not climb trees, because it would make her hands big; she must not stay in the sun, because it would make her skin coarse. She must not talk at the dinner-table, unless to answer remarks of the grown-ups. She must not ask questions upon a list of topics forbidden to little girls. She must not talk about the affairs of the family in the presence of any guest. She must not laugh aloud, nor shout, nor leave the table until she was excused, nor forget her piano practice, her singing, her French, her "hand painting." Anxiously and earnestly she strove to remember these many prohibitions and duties.

However, all these anxieties taken together were less than the one great sorrow which overhung Maggie May's life, and which little by little was revealed to her opening mind. She could not have told when she first began to sense it—any more than she could have told when first she knew that the sky was blue, or that water was

wet. She was fully grown before she heard it put into plain words by her mother: the soul-sickening admission that Papa was "drinking."

To say that a man was "drinking" had a special meaning in Maggie May's world. It did not mean that he was having the glasses of claret and burgundy and champagne which the steward served at dinner, nor did it mean the cocktail which preceded the meal, nor sherry in the turtle soup and brandy in the coffee. It did not mean the mint-juleps which would be mixed two or three times in the course of a hot day, and served with glasses full of ice and sprigs of fresh mint. It did not mean the punch which was served at all dances, or the hot toddies on winter nights. All this was not "drinking"; this was hospitality, it was the life of the South. The ladies did it along with the gentlemen, and it was proper and elegant. You kept the usual kinds of liquor in your home, and perhaps some rare ones, and talked about the flavors, the "bouquets," the various brands and their ages, and where you could buy them.

It wasn't even "drinking" when the gentlemen sat in the dining-room after the ladies had left, and smoked their cigars, and talked business and politics, and consumed quantities of whisky and soda. It wasn't "drinking" when a man sat with his cronies in the billiard-room and played poker the whole night through, in a haze of cigar-smoke and a reek of alcohol. That too was the custom, expected of every man who was not a "mollycoddle." The boys were trained to it, having their little sips of mint-julep, their half glasses of wine at meals. When they went away to college, it was assumed that they would take a share in all manly pleasures, which included poker-parties, and whiskies and soda, and cocktails at dinner and punch at dances.

No; where "drinking" began was when a man took too much, and had to disappear suddenly from a dance, leaving his friends to apologize to his partner; or when, after a poker-party, he was unable to "sleep it off" in the course of the next day; or when he took to having it in his room, by himself, without sociability; or when he had to go off somewhere, say to the home of his plantation manager, and stay for several days. That was the special meaning of "drinking"; and that was when terror began to creep into the souls of the women, and they would whisper together, and seek council from the elders, and plan gentle conspiracies, and drop anxious hints.

VI

It was Maggie May's fate to live most of her days among beautiful men going to their doom on account of liquor; yet so rigid was the code which governed such matters, never until she was grown up did her eyes fall upon one of these men in a drunken state. Of course, when she went into town, it might happen that she would see a man staggering about; but that was some low-class person, who did not count in her thoughts. Such men were the unfortunate victims of all kinds of degradation, and there was nothing that a lady could do about it.

The poor whites in this country were referred to as "Cajuns"; the descendants of those French people of the land of Acadia, in Newfoundland, whose sad story is told in Longfellow's "Evangeline." In the middle of the eighteenth century they had been deported to this swamp country, and their great-great-grandchildren were trappers, living in one-room board shacks stuck out over the bayous on piles, and reached by rickety plank walks, nailed to saplings stuck in the marsh. They poled themselves about in boats, and caught fish, and bought themselves corn, with which they made illegal whisky, called "moonshine." From such wretched beings no good was to be expected, and the planting aristocracy left them alone, except when they committed the unpardonable offense of selling liquor to Negroes.

Liquor was for sale to white persons, both by the jug and the glass, in every "general" store in the town of Acadia. Also it was sold in innumerable secret places; for the government tried to collect a tax on liquor licenses, and few approved of this, or paid if they could evade. So there was a vast illegal traffic, with occasional raids and shooting of revenue officers. It was a problem for which no one knew any solution.

Men and women of the lower classes in the South had two occupations for their leisure; the first to get drunk, and the second to get religion. If you went into Acadia on a Saturday night you would find both forms of entertainment under full headway. There would be men crowded into the liquor-shops, befuddled and sodden, or quarreling, or staggering about the streets, making the night hideous with imitations of panthers and Indians. Also there would be a meeting in a "gospel-tent," or under a clump of trees on the edge of the town, with men and women under the spell of an

exhorter, falling on their knees and confessing their drunkenness, signing the pledge and imploring Jesus to help them keep it.

But to Maggie May all this was something far-off and strange, about which she heard rumors. The Chilcotes were Episcopalians, and had a chapel on the estate, and twice a month a clergyman travelled to them, and stayed as their guest, and conducted morning and evening service for all who cared to attend, the whites in the body of the building, the blacks in the balcony upstairs, reached by a separate entrance. These services were decorous and refined, with no shouting or exhorting, or intimate confessions and scandals. It was taken for granted that ladies and gentlemen knew how to behave themselves, without help from anybody, even Jesus.

That applied not merely to church, but to the home. When Roger Chilcote had more liquor in him than he could take care of, he was at the home of his manager, being looked after by the manager's wife and servants; or he was in a hotel room, reputed to be away on important business. The only trouble was that he sometimes misjudged the amount he could carry, and was sure he was all right when to others he seemed peculiar. So, little by little, putting this and that together, his daughter became aware of the great sorrow of her young life. This golden-haired god—this radiant being of laugher and tender melancholy—there were two of him, and one was real, while the other was a painful caricature, becoming worse with every year that passed.

And how was a little girl to know which was which? How could anyone be sure? Those smiles which thrilled you so—how could you tell if Papa was really happy, or if it was the other being, the stranger, making foolish noises? If the tears came into his eyes, how could you tell whether it was the lover of kindness, contemplating the cruelties and malice of the world—or if it was this imitation creature, which could produce tears over things too silly to talk about? You listened to words coming from lips which were fountains of knowledge—and how could you be sure whether it was something so profound that you would have to take it off and ponder it all day—or something to which there was no meaning at all, a mere jumble of words given off blindly, like the bubbles of the wine which had caused it?

VII

How to tell the difference was the serious problem of a serious little girl's life. You could not tell by Papa's breath; because,

when a family was served liquor at every meal, with mint juleps and toddies in between, the smell of alcohol was as familiar as the perfume of roses. You could not tell because his face was flushed, for he was naturally ruddy, and would be flushed when he was laughing aloud, or when he came in from riding the plantation, or when he had been playing ball with the children. You could not tell because he was glad, nor because he was sad—for he was often both with cause. You could not say it was because he was talkative, for he loved to talk to any good listener, and would tell stories, and if the fate of the beautiful princess was too cruel, and tears began to run down Maggie May's cheeks, they would start into Papa's eyes also. They were an extremely emotional people, and entirely unaware of those modern standards which forbid unnecessary weeping.

No, you just couldn't tell! It was a labyrinth of Papa's emotions, in which you had to grope your way. The real Papa was complicated enough, while the imitation Papa was beyond guessing. This "tipsy" man was unstable and went quickly to extremes. He was either too gay, or too sorrowful, and would fly from gaiety to sorrow at the snapping of your finger. He was bored, impatient, wanting to get away from everything. He was abnormally sensitive and suspicious; he could not endure that his little girl should be aware of his strange moods—and so Maggie May must learn to put a bridle upon her tongue, and a screen over her eyes. If Papa behaved strangely, she must not notice it; if he said something that puzzled her, she must not try to find out what he meant. If she showed a trace of pain, or grief, or surprise, or even watchfulness or curiosity, Papa would jump up suddenly and rush from the room.

Mama would say, "Papa isn't very well, and we must be patient with him." That was all she would say; until, as the years passed, the child began, very tactfully, to reveal that she knew. This had happened with all Mrs. Chilcote's brood, one by one; but the poor sentimental lady always clung to the hope that the next one might be spared the contamination of this painful knowledge.

Maggie May, as a late-comer, was the plaything and pet of the rest; especially of her father, whose weakness made him crave affection and support. She was not a pretty child, being too thin for Southern tastes, and too dark, with eyes large and sombre. Also she was too lacking in liveliness to make what was called a "social success." But she was gentle, sensitive, and willing to take

upon her slender shoulders the burdens of those she loved. Mama's peace of mind, Papa's relief from boredom, were the first things in the world to Maggie May, and it never occurred to her to do anything but what they asked.

There was no chance for her to develop a life of her own. Papa was there, always commanding, always demanding, more and more insistently, desperately. Maggie May could not remember when she was too young to hear this call. Ruin was hanging over her loved ones. There were evil men outside who had discovered the weakness of Roger Chilcote, and were preying upon him. When they had given him drinks enough, he would be subject to fits of generosity; he would scatter handfuls of money among the crowd, or hand out hundred dollar bills to all who would take them. He would sit down to a poker-game with anybody, and lose all he had with him, and then write checks or "I.O.U's," and these would constitute debts of honor, binding upon him next morning and forever. It had happened to him to sell a whole year's sugar-crop, and gamble away every dollar in one evening.

So his family gathered about him in a phalanx; keeping watch over him day and night, devising plans to entertain and beguile him. It was his misfortune that he had no occupation with regular hours. His riding the plantation was largely superfluous, for there were competent overseers, who did not need many orders. When he went to New Orleans to transact business at the banks, it did not take very long, and then he had time to join his cronies at the clubs. Everywhere a Southern gentleman went, his arrival was celebrated with a drink, and every undertaking, of business or sport, was opened with drinks, and closed with more of them.

So Mama would go to New Orleans with Papa, and perhaps take the older children, and make a family party of it, and try to make engagements that would keep him with the ladies. When they returned to the plantation, the ladies would ask him to take them driving, or propose a game of cards, or sit on the gallery for hour after hour, chatting. It never occurred to anybody that this might be a waste of time—for what else did anybody have to do with time?

They were a gregarious people, and their desire to be alone was confined to the occasions when they were undressing. All the rest of the day they wanted "company," and to those who were of the right social class they kept open house; you might come uninvited, and stay for months without exciting comment. It was rarely that fewer than fifteen or twenty persons sat at the family dinner-table.

For the most part they were loyal friends, who had come to know Papa's weakness, and what his wife was doing; they would even go so far as to pretend that they preferred coffee to toddies, and lemonade to mint juleps! They would lie like gentlemen, and never let Papa know that they were pitying him.

But Papa knew! Oh, yes, he knew. He was being walled about by love, he was being kept with the women and children, a nursery pet. It would gall his spirit; he would sit brooding, or get up and pace about restlessly—and presently would bolt out of his cage. He would show them, every one of them, that he was still a man, no derelict or cripple! He would go among men, and do as men did, taking one or two drinks, but no more.

He would make up his mind to do this. But the trouble was that after he had one or two, he would start over again. He would say, like Rip van Winkle, "This time don't count!" The result would be, he would come home with cheeks flushed, and tongue tripping over itself; but very dignified, determined that he was all right, and would prove it to everyone. He would show that, like every Southern gentleman, he knew how much liquor he could carry. As the first step, he would order Moses, the old steward, to mix him another toddy.

VIII

In course of time it developed that the one person who could control Roger Chilcote was his youngest daughter. Maggie May was his darling, the "apple of his eye"—they liked to use those old-fashioned phrases. He would take chances with others that he would not take with her; he would become irritated with others, where she could win a smile. So the child would be summoned from her piano practice, or her French conversation, or whatever it might be, and Mama would say: "Darling, Papa is in town, and he's not very well, and the hot sun is bad for him, and won't you go and see if you can bring him home to play cards?" The child's pony would be saddled and brought to the door by a trusted servant, who would ride behind her; they would trot several miles to Acadia, and find Papa, under the covered veranda of the store where he got the kind of liquor he liked; he would be telling funny stories to a group of men, or tossing dimes to a bunch of colored boys who turned handsprings and cut capers for his amusement.

All that would stop, the instant he caught sight of Maggie May;

for, though she was only a child, she was a young lady to her social inferiors, and every male creature, white or black, must be decorous in her presence. Papa would rise and come to the curb, and say, "Hello, little girl." When they were in the privacy of the family, he had funny names for her; she would be "Pie," or maybe she would be "Bones"; but in public she had this dignified title, "little girl."

"Papa," she would say, "I'm through with my music lesson."

"Is that so, little girl?" Perhaps he would take the hint, and say, "All right, we'll have a game," and get his horse and ride back with her. But sometimes he would be stubborn, and resist cajoleries. "I am waiting for a man I must see. Tell Mama I'll be back for dinner. You read that new story-book and tell Papa what's in it."

She would ride back, disappointed; and seeing the helpless grief in her mother's eyes, she would say, "Perhaps I better go and try again, Mama. Perhaps I better think of something important."

So it was that a little girl got that part of her education which was more essential than piano or French conversation. She must manage to find something that would seem important to Papa—or something that Papa would think seemed important to her. She must learn to put pressure on him, loving but firm; she must use her power to the utmost, yet be careful never to overstrain it.

Now and then, in the muddlement of his mind, he might try to break through these barriers of reticence; to turn the proceedings into a joke, perhaps. He would look at her with a smile that was almost a leer, and say: "Yes, little girl, I know what you are doing. You're trying to get me back home!" But Maggie May would look as innocent as a dove, incapable of feminine art. "No, Papa, no! I've planned a party this afternoon, and you know it won't amount to anything if you're not home." Or else: "Papa, I'm just crazy to know what happened to Rebecca in the castle, but I can't bear to read it without you."

There was a card game called "seven-up," which two persons could play, and it was Maggie May's task to play it by the hour. She would try her best to make it exciting, pretending to be anxious to beat her father; when she lost, she would act disappointment—but not too great, so as to spoil his pleasure. Little by little she made the discovery that if he had a run of bad luck, he would begin to be bored, and would find some pretext to stop. On the other hand, by pressing him closely, but never quite succeeding, she could manage to keep him keyed up, and he would play all day. So

gradually their roles in life became reversed; the grown man was the child, while the child became prematurely grown. Maggie May took to cheating—in reverse, as it were; making blunders at critical moments, and letting Papa enjoy a laugh at her. After all, it was for him that the game was played. Was it not natural that he should expect to win—he, the male creature, the god-like one, for whom the world was made?

The numerous boy and girl cousins from the other plantations would gather, and they would play romping games: "I spy," for example—in which Maggie May would always let Papa find her, and get back to "base" ahead of her. A painful incident, when Papa chose what he considered an especially wonderful hiding-place, up on the roof of the two-story house, where no one thought of looking; he was having a grand triumph, but it was spoiled by a little Negro boy who had watched him hiding, and kept looking up at him, and asking, "How's you gwine git to yo' base, Mas' Roger?" Of course, Papa couldn't get to his base without jumping off the roof and breaking his neck! He was furious, and ordered the boy off the grounds, and would take no more interest in the game. Afterwards, he was ashamed of having behaved unworthily, and took a drink to cheer himself up.

IX

Three brothers and one sister travelled this road of tribulation with Maggie May; but they were all older, and got farther on the journey before the darkness gathered. Ted, the oldest, was twelve years older than Maggie May; which meant that he was a grand young gentleman, remote and aloof, associated with striped "blazers," gold-tipped cigarettes, galloping saddle-horses, and young ladies visiting. Pretty soon he went away to college, and the little girl picked up scraps of notions about this place of pennants, sculls, tennis-rackets, meerschaum pipes, fraternity-pins, and ties and hat-ribbons which meant secret things. A child who was alert and quick-minded could not help hearing things not meant for her ears; so Maggie May gathered that college was also a place of "fast" life, with drinking-parties and gambling-debts.

Next in order was Lelia, two years younger than Ted, but asserting her claim to be his contemporary. Lelia was a creature of chiffons and organdies, tulle and moiré silks, ribbons, scarfs and lace handkerchiefs, visiting dressmakers, shopping trips to New

Orleans, coming-out parties, balls and dinner-dances, suitors on fancy saddle-horses or in shiny sport-cars, coming to call. She was blonde and elegant, a breaker of hearts, and received so many ten-pound boxes of fancy confections that Maggie May's complexion would have been ruined for life if there had not been so many other relatives. "Sister" made a great many visits to fashionable friends all over the South; until finally came the grand splurge, when the home was fixed up like a fairy castle, and she was married to a rising young banker of New Orleans.

But still the shadow of that brilliant being cast little Maggie May into comparative darkness. There was a room in the home, one of the best, which had been Lelia's. It had been papered and decorated in pale green and white, the proper colors for a peaches and cream complexion. Now that Lelia was gone, Maggie May was told to occupy this room; but still it was always referred to as "Lelia's room," never as "Maggie May's." Nor did it occur to anyone that the room ought to be redecorated, because green and white did not set off dark eyes and hair. Maggie May never asked this change, because she was not expecting a career as a breaker of hearts. Whenever the peerless Lelia came visiting, Maggie May would move to one of the guest rooms, which had no special color schemes or esthetic charms.

After Lelia, there was a gap in the children, caused by the death of two of them. Next came Roger, junior, known to the family and servants as "Young Roger." He was four years older than Maggie May, and the next brother, Lee, was two years older; these were her playmates and disciplinarians, teaching her humility, obedience, and other virtues expected of a young lady of the South. If the game required a pale-face to be scalped by Indians, Maggie May would be as pale as desired; if there were to be a battle, requiring prisoners to be incarcerated or casualties to be interred, Maggie May would endure the stigma of British origin or Yankee residence, and perform all varieties of falling and writhing. She would tag along in hunting parties, and when a bird was shot, would not let her tears be seen, but school herself to regard it as material for taxidermy or gastronomy.

A strange thing, how three children so different could have been brought into the world by the same two parents. Lee was dark, like his mother and Maggie May; quiet, plodding, rather dull, but conscientious, born to be a good planter or business executive. "Young Roger," on the other hand, was a creature of fire, fulfilling

the image of the Psalmist, "born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." He had red hair, which turned to gold like his father's as he grew older; he was eager, impatient, driven by the law of his being to take command. Young Roger it was who absorbed history stories and set out to enact them; nor was there ever any doubt as to who was Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, "Light Horse" Harry Lee, General "Jeb" Stuart, or Morgan of the "raiders."

In short, Young Roger was a genius. There had never been anything of that sort in the Chilcote family, at least not within memory, and nobody knew how to deal with him. He had all Papa's gaiety, also his moodiness, but added to it the peculiar thing of his own, the fierce impatience. He understood things so much more quickly than other people—his swiftly-pouncing mind could not endure to wait till they caught up with him. Also he had the gift of words; he knew how to say things, to stab them into your mind. He would electrify you with vivid pictures, and keep you convulsed by his wit. He had a gift for watching his elders and mimicking their eccentricities; a wicked secret which the youngsters kept.

Also, he had a streak of cruelty in him, which his sister never was able to understand. He loved to dominate others just for the sake of proving his power. He would tease his little sister, and keep it up. One day, out of a clear sky, he announced: "When I grow up, I'm going to be a drunkard." "Oh, no, Roger!" she exclaimed in horror. But he stood by it: "I'm going to be either a drunkard, or else a soldier, and go to war." Maggie May, conscientious to the point of abnormality, would spend hours brooding over this problem. What could she do to keep her brother from becoming a drunkard or a soldier?

Since, in so large a family, it was not always possible for a young genius to have his own way, the boy learned to build up a dream world. In the attic he discovered several boxes full of leather-bound books, which had belonged to Great-grandfather Chilcote, a lawyer and scholar; they included the eighteenth century classics of English fiction, and Young Roger wiped the black dust off them and made them his secret treasure. Nobody in the family knew what was in these books, and the boy quickly decided that their ignorance was his bliss. This new world was frank, forthright, terrible from the point of view of Southern squeamishness. Young Roger became more severe in his judgments, more impatient, and even less comprehensible to these proud people, who thought them-

selves independent and daring, but really were timid and ridden by taboos.

Of course the boy had to have a confidante, and Maggie May was chosen for this honor. She was terrified by his impulses, and by his condemnations of everybody and everything; but she loved him, she adored him, second only to their father, whom he resembled so much. She would do everything that Roger told her to do, unless it was something she knew her parents had forbidden. She would listen to stories from the books he had read; presently, when he was older, and was making up stories of his own, there was "little sister," wide-eyed, awe-stricken, as if she were present at the creation of the universe according to the Book of Genesis—although Roger declared that was all bunkum, and not the way it had happened.

X

From Young Roger Maggie May began to acquire the reading habit: desiring to know all the wonderful things that he knew. The windows in the drawing-room were set in alcoves, and had thick curtains in front, to keep out the glare of daylight. Between window and curtains was a space of a couple of feet, and the ideal way to read was to get pillows and make a nest in there. But when Mama observed this, she began to worry, and explained that it was all right for a girl to read, but not to let the men know about it, otherwise they would call her a "blue-stocking," and she would have no social success.

"But, Mama," said the child—the ideas of her brother working in her soul—"why do I have to be a social success?"

"Why, Maggie May!" exclaimed the startled mother. Such a revolutionary idea had never before been voiced in her presence.

But Maggie May persisted; if a girl preferred to read books rather than to be a social success, why shouldn't she? Mama explained, a little girl might think that books were all she wanted, but later she would discover that she had to have friends, and a husband and a home. She would have to go to parties and meet men, and please them——

"But, Mama," said the child, "I don't want to marry more than one, do I?"

"No, dear, let us hope not!"

"Then, why do I have to please so many?"

"Because, dear, you won't please one unless you please all. You

see, it's not just any man that you want to marry; it will be some particular man; the best one, I hope. And you will want him to want you; and the way to be sure of that is to have other men around, striving to win you away from him."

"Oh!" said the girl. "So that's why Lelia made them jealous?"

"Not exactly that, dear; but you have to let him know that other men consider you desirable. If you're queer and bookish, and different from everybody else, why then, men are apt to be afraid of you, and you'll be a wall-flower, what Ted calls a 'frost'—though I don't like this modern slang."

In the ordinary course of events, Maggie May would have studied dutifully those arts, whereby Lelia, under Mama's tutelage had managed to capture the wealthy and desirable Mr. Pakenham of New Orleans. But there was something else which claimed more and more of her time—Papa, and Papa's troubles. Even Mama could not deny that Papa must come first; and so the child was drawn away from the graces and vanities of this world, and became, instead of a dazzling social success, a little brown mouse, gliding here and there about the house without anybody noticing her especially—and all the time with strange things going on in her head, sprouts of ideas which had no place in the civilization of the delta, half Creole and half Cavalier, but would have been more suitable to Massachusetts, habitat of "blue-stockings" and "strong-minded women," who did not strive to make themselves agreeable to the menfolks, but presumed to set up standards of their own.

CHAPTER TWO - - *THE "DEMON RUM"*

I

MAGGIE MAY could not have said at what age she first began to have unorthodox ideas on the subject of the drinking of liquor. She lived surrounded by the problem, taking in her impressions through the skin, as it were. There was Grandfather Chilcote, still alive, and laughing at his doctors and their warnings; but no longer quite so heartily, because he was stopped by sudden twinges of gout, and laid up for spells with what the doctors said was his liver. There was Uncle Bernie, husband of one of the Chilcote daughters, who lived in New Orleans, and got drunk and shamed his wife in public, so that she had three times left him, and vowed she would never go back. There was old Mr. Waterman, who lived nearby, and came visiting; he had a red and bulbous nose with purple veins in it, and used to laugh and say it wasn't blood, but the best Bourbon rye. One day he keeled over at his dinner-table, and was put to bed, and lay for a year or two with his face paralyzed—and the doctors said that also was the best Bourbon rye.

The drink problem, as Maggie May knew it, was confined to the men; all that the women did was to worry. The child never knew of but one case of a woman's getting drunk, and that was a woman from the North. This incident happened when Maggie May was young, and the occasion was one of social éclat, one of those events which people look forward to for months and talk about for years afterward. There was a great public man—one so great that everybody talked about him, and the papers were full of his pictures. He had a daughter, whose position in fashionable society was that of a princess; in fact, the newspapers all referred to her as "the Princess," and when she travelled about the country, crowds rushed to stare at her and do her honor. Now she was coming to visit New Orleans, and the rumor went around that it had been decided to marry her to the heir of one of the oldest families and the richest, near neighbors of the Chilcotes. The appointment of the son to a high diplomatic post was understood to be part of this bargain.

There was rush of preparation, and newspaper reporters coming to ask questions, and camera-men to take pictures of the homes which the Princess was to visit. She came to dine at the home of Grandfather Chilcote, and all the Chilcote daughters and the "in-law" ladies helped to prepare a banquet; Grandfather put his finest old wines on ice, and they all arrayed themselves in their newest raiment, and there came the Princess and the young man she was going to marry, in a grand big car. They sat at the table, with shining silver and hand-cut crystal and hand-embroidered linen and blue-ribbon roses, while Grandfather told about his wines, and the Princess tasted them and appreciated them; she appreciated them so well that the servants had a hard time keeping her glass filled, and finally she told them to leave the bottle at her place. Before long she was having a perfectly glorious time; when the butler brought her a silver dish full of steaming hot mushrooms with dark brown sauce, she took the dish from his hands and emptied it over the head of the young man she was expecting to marry!

So she did not marry him; nor did she marry any other Southern gentleman. She left the house of her fiancé's family next morning, and went to New Orleans, to another family which had invited her; but this family did not ask anybody to meet her, and she had no escort to the Mardi Gras ball, and her name was spoken in whispers, as if she had turned out to be an illegitimate princess, or one with a black skin. If you mentioned her name to the Chilcote ladies, they would say, yes, she had been their guest; and then there would be icy silence—not another word on that subject! Among the intimates of the young man who had been intending to marry her an ethical problem was gravely discussed: should he keep, or should he give up, that diplomatic post which had come to him as a "dot"?

It was from this episode that little Maggie May derived her ideas about the North and its culture. When "reunion day" came round, and Grandfather Chilcote put on his faded grey uniform with the colonel's stripes, and rode in a parade in New Orleans, Maggie May knew what it was about; when she listened to orators celebrating the "lost cause," she understood their proud melancholy and disdain. There had been a war between one part of America where only the gentlemen got drunk, and another part where both gentlemen and ladies got drunk; the latter had won, and so now fashionable society was presided over by a drunken "Princess."

II

As Maggie May grew older, and the family burdens became heavier, she found herself debating this question: Did anybody *have* to drink liquor? When she was fourteen, she took the problem to her mother. The conversation may sound naïve to sophisticated moderns, but then, neither Maggie May nor her mother had ever heard of a "modern." They took life seriously, and were entirely unashamed of doing so.

"No, dear," said Mama, "I don't think anybody really needs to drink. It's that they like to."

"But some day they get to like it too much. So why should they begin?"

"Well, dear, I suppose each person thinks he won't become an addict."

"But so many do, Mama! Why don't people pour it all out, and never have any more of it in the world?"

"I don't know, child. I wish they would." It was so like poor kind and helpless Mrs. Chilcote; just that much, and no more!

"What would happen, Mama, if you and I were to say we wouldn't drink any more?"

"Nothing very much, dear; there are many people who don't care for it."

"Would it keep me from being a social success?"

"I'm afraid it would make it harder. People would feel that you were posing as superior, or something. I think it's better for a lady to take just a sip or two, as I do, and then it doesn't excite comment."

"Do you think I'd be as healthy, Mama, if I didn't drink my claret? Say if I had lemonade, or something like that?"

"I don't know, dear. Dr. Aloysius says you are underweight, and need nourishing."

"Well, I think I'll try an extra glass of milk, Mama, and see how I get along." Thus the bold adventurer, groping in the field of diet! "I'll just tell Moses about it, and maybe Papa won't notice it."

But Papa did notice it; Papa never missed anything that bore upon his weakness, and the attitude of his loved ones thereto. He insisted that his "little girl"—or his "Pie," or his "Bones," or his "Punkin"—needed her claret so that she would put on weight. But Maggie May insisted that she didn't like the taste of claret, she didn't like port any better, and was going to try fruit juice and an extra glass of milk; by quiet persistence she got her way. There

was conversation about it at meal-times among relatives and guests. Grandmother Chilcote had been a teetotaler, but she had died rather young; some good red wine would have enriched her blood—so it was argued by a great uncle of one of the "in-laws," who was over ninety, and had his toddy every morning. The general verdict was against rash experiments in the field of health.

But not long afterwards it happened that the husband of sister Lelia got into some sort of shooting scrape when he was drunk, and painfully wounded a bystander; if he hadn't been a "gentleman" he might have been sent to jail. So Maggie May had a new argument against drinking, and began to agitate with her two younger brothers. What right did Mr. Pakenham have to get himself into condition where he shot an innocent bystander?

Lee at this time was sixteen, a student in a military school not far away. He came home at week-ends, and told Maggie May about the boys climbing out of the windows of the barracks at night and going on "jags." The younger generation was drinking more than ever, it appeared; in fact, everybody was drinking more, and nobody could figure out what to do about it. Maggie May had come upon a church paper in which the question was argued, and statistics were quoted, showing how in America the per capita consumption of alcohol was increasing every year. Fortified with this, she was able to impress her brother, a conscientious lad with a strong religious bent. There was a band of Methodist women, carrying on a crusade in the village, and Lee "signed the pledge," making almost a scandal among the Chilcotes.

With Roger junior it was, alas, a different story. He was just nineteen, a splendid young iconoclast, starting college. He had shot up to six feet, lean and inclined to stoop-shoulderedness, on account of having spent so much time "poring over books," as the family phrased it disapprovingly. He was near-sighted, and had to wear glasses, which gave him a scholarly aspect; when he didn't have the ladies to look after him, he would forget to have his golden hair cut, until Papa said he would be taken for a "fiddler." In short, he was different from the pattern, and nobody could "make him out," and he gave them no help. He was going to college just to get away from home, he said, not because he expected to find things better there; the college was a place of Philistinism. It was young Roger's way to use obscure words, without caring whether anybody understood them. Maggie May read about Philistines in the Bible, and

knew they were giants, and that David had killed one with a sling-shot. But were there any in the South?

Young Roger spurned the "water-wagon" as a means of conveyance through life. He was going to lead a revolt, but under a different banner. He spoke patronizingly of "little sister's" ability to judge the evils against which a man of superior culture should direct the arrows of his wit. Those old English novels which had shaped Young Roger's mind were full of robust and hilarious drinking. The country squires of Fielding, the naval officers of Smollett, the Irish rakes of Charles Lever had all been capable three-bottle men, or better; the old poetry-books were full of "Anacreontics," or songs in praise of alcohol:

> Fill up the bowl, then, fill it high,
> Fill all the glasses there; for why
> Should every creature drink but I;
> Why, man of morals, tell me why?

The woman of morals strove to tell her brother, but could not check his headstrong impulse. He belonged to a generation which was to register revolt against what it called "Puritanism." Here and there, all over the country, a protest was starting in the hearts and minds of the young, a rage against the dullness, hypocrisy and materialism of American small-town life. Each rebel thought he was alone, but sooner or later he would find a fellow-malcontent; in every college would be half a dozen, an ill-assorted, seemingly impotent group. They would nourish themselves on little magazines; they would drift to the cities, and start an imitation of the art-life of Paris; they would learn to write, or to draw, or to paint, or put on plays—and presently would burst into the limelight, and America would discover, to its dismay, that it had a new culture. If the young devotees of this culture got drunk, it was not so much for the pleasure it gave them, as for the pain it gave to their elders. It was a form of defiance, the easiest and the cheapest.

III

When Maggie May grew old enough to think about such matters, she began to realize that her father did not believe in the religion which the rest of their world accepted. The Reverend Mr. Cobbein would come and hold services in the chapel, and Papa would attend

and politely listen while the doctrine was expounded; but afterwards he would shake his head and say, no, it was impossible for any thinking man to believe that there was an all-loving and all-powerful Creator running this universe. If God had the power, and had deliberately made so much evil, then surely He was not kind. Papa would brood over the spectacle of human suffering until it seemed as if he was going into melancholia. So many dreadful things all about you—poisonous snakes and spiders, and still more poisonous desires in the hearts of men and women!

Especially he grieved over the "Negro problem." This mass of "semi-humanity" out of Africa—how were you going to tame it or lift it? Impossible to keep it at work without fear and force, a beating now and then, and yet more shocking punishments for cruel crimes. Black men would get whisky, in spite of all efforts to prevent it, and then they would fall to carving one another with razors; women in jealous fury would mutilate their rivals or their unfaithful lovers; on the plantation one day a black woman, seeking to punish the father of her babies, put the babies into a barrel of feathers and set fire thereto. Contemplating such occurrences, Papa would decide to drink himself into oblivion. A vicious circle—one could not be sure whether he drank because he was unhappy, or was unhappy because he drank.

Then came the summer when the nations of Europe rushed into war. At first it was to Maggie May an event only half realized, a tale of "far-off, unhappy things." She never thought it would make any difference in her life—except that it distressed Papa. He would read the daily papers, and bow his head in his two hands and exclaim over the madness of mankind. The most incredible horror in the whole of history; and sooner or later America would be drawn into it—a prediction which seemed to his wife and daughter a fantasy cooked out of the fumes of alcohol.

But drunk or sober, Papa would go on bitterly upholding this dreadful idea to the other gentlemen; and presently it developed that his oldest son had adopted the same opinion. Worse yet, Ted insisted that we *must* go in, it was the only way to "save civilization." He became so convinced in the course of a year, that he turned his plantation over to a manager, and went into a training-camp for officers. Maggie May heard her mother and father discussing this new catastrophe, and agreeing that Ted's unhappiness with his wife had much to do with the matter. Papa said that young people had their own way so much nowadays, and came to be so impatient and

self-willed, it was hard for any two of them to get along together.

Maggie May, now fifteen years old, followed the war in the conversation of the grown-ups. With Ted coming home in khaki, and Lee and several cousins in cadet uniforms, the place began to take on the aspect of a camp. Never had there been such activity of every sort in the South; for, strange as it might seem, destruction in one part of the world made prosperity in another. Sugar had to be fed to the fighting men; cotton had to be spun into khaki for them, and made into nitroglycerine to blow them to pieces, and then into bandages to hold them together. Everybody was speculating, the price of lands was leaping, and a daughter of the Chilcotes might have whatever she fancied: pure-blooded Arabian saddle-horses, or Kentucky thoroughbreds, if such happened to catch her father's eye; the fanciest of sport-cars to dash about the country in; blood-red rubies for her throat, or, suiting her quiet colors, a string of glowing pearls; lovely dresses, all she had the patience to stand up and be fitted with. She might have everything, in short, but serenity, and respite from grief and fear!

IV

Roger Chilcote was like a man caught in a quicksand, being engulfed to his doom. Neither his own convulsive struggles, nor the prayers and tears of his wife and daughter, could have any effect upon his fate. He had come to the stage where pretenses were broken down, concealment impossible. He would go on a drinking-bout at the home of his manager, and the manager and his wife and servants could not control him, and would have to send for the old Colonel, or for one of Roger's brothers, or for "Captain Ted." The time came when the manager was threatening to give up his post, because he would no longer endure the burden of a drunkard in his home; and this manager was a valuable man, who had saved Papa from ruin more than once.

One of the brothers would take the victim off to "Hot Springs," where the whisky would be boiled out of him, and he would be rubbed and kneaded and exercised and fed, and sent back pale and subdued, full of new resolves and tendernesses. Mama had got to the point where social considerations no longer counted; she gave away the family stock of wine and brandy and whisky, and put Moses, the old steward, at other tasks, and ordained that everybody in her home should ride on the "water-wagon" from this time forth.

But all too late! Papa could not live without his "toddies" and his "bracers" and his "nips." He would get the stuff from his cronies in the town, the evil men who wanted his money. He would sneak it in and drink it in his room, and wash the glass to hide the traces. The time came—the first time in their lives—when pretence failed between father and daughter. She could no longer pretend that she was ignorant of his shame. She fell on her knees before him, bursting into tears and pleading with him, "Please, please, Papa! Do not drink any more!" The disgraced father began sobbing hysterically: "Oh, little girl, little girl, what can Papa do? I cannot give it up! It is a fiend that has got me! That my beloved child should know it! I can never look into her face again!" Maggie May had a hard time stopping him. He promised to "sign the pledge," and gave her the bottle he had under his pillow, and saw her empty it into the lavatory. "By God, if I'm not man enough to resist it, I'd better be dead and out of the way!"

For a month or two he kept his word, and when he broke it, he disappeared from home, unable to face his child. Ted had to come from the training-camp and find him, and take him away to what was called a "Keeley institute," a place to which Southern gentlemen flocked by thousands. You would hear it as a subject of discussion at dinner-tables, to what extent this "Keeley cure" was effective. The general opinion was that they would fix you so that you didn't have to drink again, unless you wanted to. But some sceptic would point out that this was the essence of the difficulty. Anybody could stop it if he wanted to; but how could he stop when he wanted a drink?

Papa came back again, still paler—and more melancholy, because of the wound to his pride. There was no more joy and spontaneity left in him now—he was just an invalid who must stay at home with the women, and know that his position as master in the household was gone. He must be forbidden the company of his cronies, and know that these outcasts were making jokes about his plight. He must pray to a god in which he did not believe, for pity which was not in the scheme of a blind, mechanical universe. What was it all about—this universe, with men like himself unable to control an appetite that destroyed them? God in heaven, what was it all about, with the whole of humanity rushing madly into the slaughter pit in Europe! And all he could do was to sit at home—under surveillance—and play cards with his adolescent daughter!

A critical time in the life of Maggie May! Her character was being determined; it was made certain that for the rest of her days she would be serious, anxious, and puzzled about the contradictions of life. As her tormented father was questioning the universe, so also was his tormented child.

In her sensitive young mind one question persisted. "What can I do to-day to help him?" And this led to others—a train of them. What could she do to keep him at home? What would arouse his interest, his old-time fun and good fellowship? How did one restore interest to a person who had lost it? From what source did one get courage and resolve? Out of such questionings the religions have been born; but Maggie May was too young to think up a new one, and the old ones would not do, because Papa rejected them—and whatever was not good for Papa was good for nothing.

Her only resource was love; her duty, day and night, to make love effective. She learned from daily effort and experience that love must be wise; it must have the cunning of the serpent, of the enchantress, the diplomat, the intriguer—all known varieties. Love must be patient, tireless, on duty day and night; but it must be camouflaged and dressed up—the nurse must wear the costume of Mardi Gras, the paint and powder of a comedienne.

There was nobody to help Maggie May. None of the other children would give that much time, or take that much trouble. You couldn't expect them to, because the older sister had a husband, and therefore troubles of her own, while the others were men, and had their valuable lives to live. Mama would do all she could, but unfortunately Mama wasn't mentally equal to the task. Maggie May would never have been undutiful enough to formulate the idea that Mama was inert; she just realized day by day that Mama didn't know what to do. Perhaps Mrs. Chilcote had had too much of it in her early married life; perhaps she had made the mistake of being too unhappy, and letting her unhappiness be seen. Anyhow, a man would not stand as much managing from his wife as from his favorite daughter.

Love was strong, but it was not omnipotent. Its power was weakened by the fact that it was wielded by a mere woman, an inferior. Maggie May did not resent that status; she knew, of course, that she was less capable than Papa, she would never know all the things that he knew, never shine as he did, nor be able to entertain a company in his splendid manner. She must make capital of that; restore

to him the belief that they all depended upon him as the head of the family; make him think it was he who cheered her up, who taught her how to live, who furnished the animation, the courage, the dignity. What were the things Papa had liked to do? Those must be the things Maggie May craved to excel in. What were the things he had liked to talk about? She must ask a thousand questions on those subjects. In these efforts she acquired enough skill in intrigue to have kept an empire going.

V

Gentle brown eyes Maggie May had, and hair to match, and in this time of her blooming a rich coloring of cheeks and lips. She had a mischievous smile, and at the same time a kindness that never failed. She would not be a ball-room favorite, a beauty like her "big sister," but there would be boys of finer discernment to discover and adore her. They began now to gather, and there was the problem of what to do with them. She was supposed to learn to be courted, in playful yet proper ways, not openly admitted until after she had made her debut. It was her mother's business to provide and oversee these occasions, and her father's to co-operate, with some teasing and mock-jealousy thrown in.

But here was a special case. Maggie May already had the responsibilities of playmate, friend, and mother to a man, and could not, or would not, be free of them. She must make Papa think she wasn't really interested in boys; she must overcome his idea that he was in the way, and was spoiling her pleasures. She would rather go motoring with him than with any boy in the delta. If the boy wanted to come along, all right, but let him find a way to be agreeable to Papa. If he wanted to come calling in the evening, let him join in the game of seven-up.

What were the suitors to make of it? She could not explain matters. She could not say: "I have to stay with my father, because otherwise he'll take a drink." But the boys made their guesses; they would be polite and considerate, and help to keep Roger Chilcote thinking he was a member of the younger generation. They would agree to Maggie May's declaration that going to dances was silly; understanding that Maggie May could not go, because there was no way to keep her father from the punch-bowl, which everybody else in the room would be visiting.

VI

This home-keeping regime was successful for several months after Papa had taken the "Keeley cure." The family got a respite, and began to breathe more freely. The plantation was looked after, and a crop sold at the highest prices ever heard of, and the money put safely in bank.

The respite served to tide them over the death of Grandpa Chilcote, a time of strain. The old Colonel "passed on," full of years, and of honors, and the best Kentucky whisky. It had been the cause of his long life, he insisted to the end; and this was a problem Maggie May had to wrestle with. Some, apparently, could drink it and not be hurt by it, while others were made into fools and nervous wrecks. The phrase was, "Some can carry it." Maggie May, looking about her, and putting this and that together, knew that Grandpa Chilcote was one of the few fortunate ones; he had set the example of what he called "good cheer," and others, trying to follow it, had been brought to misery. There were many families in the neighborhood, hiding a secret like Maggie May's, and nursing a victim of alcoholism; there were scores of men headed to ruin, and young fellows "sowing their wild oats"—storing up misery for women who would marry them, and children not yet brought into the world.

The old Colonel must have expected his whisky to keep him alive forever, for he made no will, and this was the cause of trouble in the family. The property was to be divided equally, they all agreed; but it was difficult to tell what the land was worth, in such a time of rising markets, and they would not sell any of it, and admit strangers to Pointe Chilcote. Who was going to determine the value of objects of art and family heirlooms? Who would fix the price of a silver punch-ladle with the head of Queen Anne on it, or of a gold snuff-box which had been presented to a Chilcote by the French governor of Louisiana colony? There were "in-law" ladies who had set their hearts on this or that, and kept egging on their husbands to assert their rights.

Papa wanted to have nothing to do with all this. As the oldest son, he had a claim upon the "big house" and its treasures, but he declared he would rather stay where he was than quarrel with his brothers and sisters. As the disputes became more sharp, poor Roger fell subject to fresh fits of melancholy. What was the use of living in a world in which even the best people were victims of greed? What did anybody want with worldly possessions, when

civilization was throwing itself away? No, life was too cruel, too terrible to be lived! So Maggie May would have to rack her brains, to think of something good to say about the human race. Dangerous to let Papa be too sad—and equally dangerous to let him be too happy, for then he would remember his cronies, and the good times he used to have playing poker!

In the summer and fall of 1916 there was a campaign for the re-election of Woodrow Wilson, who had "kept us out of war," and promised to go on doing so. Papa thought this a service which deserved the support of every citizen. He felt the call especially, because of the activities of his oldest son, "Captain Ted," who was a full-fledged young militarist, drilling a company of the wealthy and fashionable at a summer encampment of the state militia, and scolding the pacifist president of his country to every one who would listen. Somebody had to counteract Ted's influence!

Papa had been active in politics when he was younger, and was now like a knight at the outset of a crusade. Not that there was any danger of the Republicans carrying the state of Louisiana; but there were border states, such as Kentucky and Tennessee, rated as uncertain, where a Southern orator might intervene with good effect. But Mama was thrown into hysterics by the idea. She knew that politics and liquor were two names for the same thing in America; every convention was a debauch, and a man could not go stump-speaking without having drinks thrust under his nose in the hotel rooms where he stayed, the homes he visited, the banquets at which he spoke. Impossible to expect any "cure" to stand the strain of political life!

The ladies had to think up pretexts. Mama had to get a doctor to order her to the mountains of North Carolina for a month, and Maggie May had to be seized with a desire to understand Hume's "History of England," which she found among the books upstairs in the attic. They all lived in a panic, watching Papa's restless moods, realizing the new discontent which was gnawing his soul. Hurry, and think up some new diversion, charades for the young folks to act in, or a set of Italian bowling balls to be played with on the lawn! Or, if he could not play, let Maggie May devise some appeal for guidance from this wisest of mentors, some way to make him seem indispensable. She would have but a short time to put her wits to work—and then a long, long time to brood over her failure!

VII

There developed an unappeasable quarrel between the wife of Daubney Chilcote, Papa's youngest brother, and Gertrude, the oldest of Papa's sisters. Mrs. Daubney had got from the Colonel, before his death, a valuable set of antique china, the kind of thing which you keep in a glass cabinet, and never allow a servant to touch without "standing right over her." Mrs. Daubney claimed that the old gentleman had given her this set as a reward for the bearing of three children, an unusual performance for a modern lady; the gift had nothing to do with Daubney's inheritance, and the in-law lady was furious because Sister Gertrude insisted upon having it appraised, and the amount deducted. Both women kept insisting that Roger, as the oldest son, should decide the quarrel; each would come and recite the offenses and character defects of the other, and after the interview Papa would be sunk in a pit of melancholy.

It was on one of these occasions that Mama came to Maggie May, wringing her hands, her face a picture of despair. "Oh, what are we going to do? Oh, Papa is drinking again!" A Negro had brought the dreadful tidings. "Master" was down at Tidball's, in the town, playing cards with Judge Stuart and Colonel Jonas, a group of his cronies, and he had a bottle in front of him, and was pouring it out for himself. So Maggie May—then just seventeen—must jump into her new runabout, with a servant to ride in the rumble seat, and race into town.

The servant went into the place and summoned Papa; but he refused to come out. He sent word that he "had to see a man"—an excuse so familiar to the girl that it hardly had any meaning at all. She was so desperate that she broke the rules of young ladyhood, and went into that place, a general store with a room in back where liquor was served, and where the proprietor, a Yankee from the North, sat and won money from men after he had got them half drunk. Papa got up, horrified that his child should come where men were drinking and gambling; he could not look her in the eye, and mumbled his words. He told her, no, he could not go home, he had a very important business matter to transact with a man who was coming to town to see him, and Maggie May must not wait for him. When she tried to plead, he commanded her to leave.

She ought not to have obeyed him—so she decided later. She ought to have made him come at any cost—even if she had to fling her arms about him and burst into tears. In spite of any humilia-

tion, she should have got him out of that place. But there was the training of her lifetime; it would be easier for a lady to die than to humiliate herself and her father before their social inferiors. To express intense emotion before outsiders—as if one were a shouting Methodist, kneeling in the gutter and praying for lost souls!

Maggie May drove back, sobbing all the way. And then what were they to do? She telephoned to Ted, but he had his military duties, it was the day of a grand review, upon which the safety of the country depended. She telephoned to Lee, her youngest brother, but he was off on a fishing-party somewhere out in the Gulf of Mexico. There was only Young Roger, who was hiding in New Orleans, writing a book of poems. It was hours before Maggie May could get hold of him, and he promised to come on the first train; but when he arrived, it was to learn that Tidball had taken his father, and had him hid, nobody knew where.

The son got two of his uncles to help, and they traced the pair to New Orleans, and inquired at all the hotels and clubs, but could not find them. It was ten days before they succeeded, and then only with the help of the police and the banks—because somebody tried to cash a check signed by Roger Chilcote, after his account had been brought below zero. Papa had been half drunk the whole time, playing poker some twenty hours out of twenty-four, trying to win back the money which he had lost to various men, some of them professional gamblers.

He had overdrawn his account in every bank where he kept money, both in New Orleans and at home—and not merely his own funds, but those which he controlled as trustee of his father's estate. Realizing the plight in which this placed him, he had tried to win back the money by putting mortgages on his plantations, one after another, and these he had actually signed before a notary, and they had been recorded at the county court-house. As if to make a complete job of it, he had written "I.O.U.'s" for one or two hundred thousand dollars which he didn't own anywhere. Such was the way of a high-spirited Southern gentleman when his sporting instincts were muddled up with his drinking!

VIII

They put Papa in a hospital, where he could be restrained by force, and had a man watching him, every moment of the day and night. Mama and Maggie May came up to New Orleans and visited

him—a painful experience in a girl's life. Papa's usually rosy face was the color of a lump of putty, and he could not look his loved ones in the eyes. He was dressed in pajamas, but could not stay in bed; he would stray about the room, and when he sat down, his hands would be running here and there, like mice. "Oh, my daughter," he whispered, "I am in hell!" He had been having what the attendants called "the D.T.'s," and was now being "tapered off."

A time when love was called for, and after the fashion of love, it answered. Maggie May caught his hands, and poured out her soul. They needed him, they could not get along without him. She would come and stay here all day long; they would suffer it out together, and in the end they would be happy again. At first Papa would only repeat that he was a lost soul. He would weep and moan, and grovel with shame; he had ruined them all——

"No, no!" the girl would cry. "No, Papa, the money doesn't matter, so long as we have you. All you have to do is to make up your mind not to drink any more, and everything will be all right!"

She won him to the idea of a new start. He would go into ecstasies of resolve, swearing by all the sacred things in which he did not believe. Every kind of emotion, to help him over that terrible period of "tapering off," the getting of the poisons out of his system! They would give him doses of other drugs, hypodermics to make him sleep, and when he woke up, several cups of strong black coffee, and big black cigars, and quantities of purgatives, and now and then a little milk, when he could be got to retain it. Maggie May would sit and read to him—but he could not listen for more than a few minutes. He would have to hold her hand, and talk about himself, his new resolves, the mighty efforts he was going to make—but none greater than right now, just to endure his sufferings, which were beyond description.

The men of the family were holding business consultations. There was nothing they could do but pay the gambling debts, for that was a matter of honor among Southern gentlemen. They would stand by Papa, but they would have to put him in pawn, as it were; he would have to agree never to play cards for money again, and there would have to be an attendant for a while to see that he kept the promise. Also, the plantations would be in pawn; the manager would run them, and the brothers would handle the money, and Papa would have an allowance. With the high prices prevailing, the family would be all right again in the end. Papa agreed to

everything—yes, he was unfit to have money, he was a disgrace to the proud name of Chilcote, he was unfit to live!

For two weeks the hospital regime continued, and then they took him home—to a hospital run by Mama and Maggie May. There were two men attendants, unobtrusive, and keeping out of conversational range, but never out of sight: a shame which Papa endured with never a word of protest. If he was left unoccupied, he would sit for hours brooding, with only the straying hands to reveal the state of his nerves. But Maggie May hardly ever left him unoccupied; she would be at hand with books, music, games—harmless seven-up, which they played for fun, not the dreadful devastating poker. She would take Papa driving, and they would call on friends, sitting on the gallery, so that the attendant might keep in sight without calling attention to himself. Everybody knew what he was doing, but everybody pretended not to know, and Papa also pretended.

But there were hours in the night when he could not sleep, and would lie brooding. There were hours in the day when he would pretend to be asleep, just so that he might eat himself up with brooding. Was it that he did not believe in the game of family love he was playing? Was it that he did not believe in any part of the life he lived? Maggie May used to wonder, in the long years that she had to look back upon this stage of her life. Was it that Papa was in the wrong environment? Was he meant to be some sort of hero, a great political leader, or soldier in a war of liberation; that he had energies locked up in him which he had no way to use, and so he chafed himself to death? That might be true of all the fine and brave and beautiful men whom she watched going to their doom with liquor. Something was wrong with the times, that such men did not have adequate ways of self-expression.

IX

Some time during the night the attendant fell asleep; and Papa rose, and slipped in his stockinged feet into the bathroom, and there took a safety razor blade, and stole silently out of the room. He was considerate, as ever; he did not want to desecrate the house which his loved ones occupied, so he went out of doors. Perhaps he thought with a shudder of the half-wild hogs which now and then came out of the swamps and rooted up the lawn under the oak trees. He went into the dairy-house, a low building of white-

washed bricks, having a stone floor inside, easy to clean. He closed the door behind him and sat down in the darkness, and carefully and neatly sliced into the arteries, first of one wrist and then the other; making lengthwise cuts, so as not to sever the cords in the wrist, which would have made it impossible to operate on the other wrist. To make doubly sure, he took a deep slash into one of the blood-vessels of his neck; after which he lay with head and wrists considerately placed over a drain. No doubt he brooded upon his sins and failures, until he fell asleep—this time without the help of drugs.

Maggie May was awakened by a tapping upon her door, just at daylight. It was the attendant, who had awakened and discovered his patient gone. The girl sprang up, and got into her dressing-gown and started towards the door, when she heard a shriek from one of the Negro women outside. She guessed what it meant, and rushed downstairs. By that time the women in the kitchen and outside were screaming, but none could say the dreadful thing they had seen. "In de dairy-house!"—that was all, and then, "Oh, Miss Maggie May! Oh, Miss Maggie May!" When she got to the dairy-house, there was just light enough to see her father stretched out upon his face, and the long stream of what she knew was blood. She ran to him, and needed only to touch his face to realize that he was dead; it was as cold as everything else in the place.

Something rose up inside the girl, something convulsive, cataclysmal; she wanted to give way and shriek, like the Negro women who were crowding behind her. But instantly came her training: "No, no! I'll have to help Mama!" She would always have to help somebody, doing things that others were not strong enough to do. She turned, and started to command the Negro women to be silent. But it was too late, they were yelling all over the place, and some could not forego the excitement of running to Mrs. Chilcote.

A minute or two later the mother came, with hair streaming, and not even her stockings on—an unthinkable, almost unmentionable thing in connection with a Southern lady. She behaved just as Maggie May had foreseen—throwing herself upon the body, emitting a series of harrowing cries. She turned it over, turned the pitiful face up, ghastly white where it was not bloody, and soiled with dirt from the floor. She began shaking him, crying to him to answer her: "Roger! Roger! Speak to me! Roger, what have you done?"

The girl had to intervene. "He's dead, Mama."

The mother's eyes stared at her for an instant. "Dead?" She burst into sobbing, and threw herself down and began kissing the face, covered with clotted blood—kissing it on cheeks, lips, and glassy, lifeless eyes. The Negro women, who wanted only the example of a white person to set them off, were tearing their hair, one or two of them falling down and rolling in convulsions, as they were accustomed to do at "revivals."

That mustn't go on, of course; the white people had to keep their self-mastery, in order to rule the blacks. Again and again the girl had to fight back impulses of hysteria, and take command of the situation. "No, Mama, you mustn't behave like that! Listen, Mama!" She had to pull the frantic woman from the body; she had to grasp her, and speak commandingly. "Listen, Mama! Papa is all right! He has got away from his sufferings!" The idea came to her all at once, like a burst of light in her mind. Papa wasn't having any more pain!

But this consolation was not for a Southern lady of the old school. Mrs. Chilcote stared at her daughter for an instant with horrible, seeming-insane eyes, and then screamed: "He's in hell! Oh! My poor Roger has gone to hell!"

Maggie May had overlooked that view of the matter. Most people believed in hell, but Papa had not believed, and his daughter, without realizing it, had come to assume that he was right. But not Mama. She knelt on the bloody stone floor of the dairy-house, her hands stretched up to a stern Arbiter in the sky. "Oh, God, save my poor Roger! Oh, Christ, have mercy on him! Oh, Jesus, don't send my Roger to hell!" The Negroes, having doubt about the genuine sulphur and brimstone, were on their knees shouting in a futuristic chorus: "Lord Jesus, save us! Lord Jesus, save po' Massa Roger!"

So Maggie May had to take charge of things, with not a moment to spare for grief. She had to order the attendant to go and 'phone to the doctor, and then to the other members of the family at their homes. She had to send one of the Negro men for the manager of the plantation, put this man in charge, have the wailing chorus driven out, and get her mother separated from the body—no easy task. She had to see that pails of water were brought, and the poor dead face washed clean of blood and dirt, and the gaping empty wounds in wrists and neck bound with cloths, and a suit of fresh pajamas put on the body. All this was wrong from the point of view of the law, for the body should have been left undisturbed

until the coroner had examined it; but the law on Pointe Chilcote then was the will of a seventeen-year-old girl.

After the body had been laid on the bed in Papa's room, Maggie May had to go back to her mother, now surrounded by sisters-in-law and nieces, and strive once more to remove from the distracted mind the cruel image of her husband burning in fires of brimstone and sulphur. Oh, all the things that she might have done for that poor man! All the words of love she had failed to speak! All the wrongs she had committed, the impatience with his weakness—she had even threatened to leave him several times, and now, of course, it came back to torture her memory; the angry words turned to fire, and burned her soul, and she was the one who was in hell!

All that day Maggie May went about, never resting, and most of the night she sat by her mother's bedside, pleading, whispering words of comfort. That went on until after the funeral, with no time to indulge in tears. She had to keep holding the magical thought before her, that Papa had escaped; wherever he was, he wasn't drinking any more, he wasn't suffering the craving for drink. She even thought—a fleeting idea that she would not harbor, because it seemed so dreadful—that maybe Papa had taken the best way out of his troubles. Only one thing must really have hurt him—the vision of his loved ones finding his dead body, and getting such an awful shock!

Maggie May got this shock, even though she did not show the effects. The way she "bore up" was a marvel to the members of the family; but all the time deep scars were being graven in her soul, and the time would come when these would show, in actions and points of view difficult for the others to understand. Maggie May Chilcote was going to be, in her own quiet way, that unpleasant thing known to her family as a "strong-minded woman"!

CHAPTER THREE · *TARLETON HOUSE*

I

IT WAS the afternoon of a warm day in October, and a shaft of pale sunshine lay upon the old brownstone houses on the north side of the street; one of those old residence streets in the west twenties of Manhattan, half-way through the process of being crowded out by business. Across the way was an office building, next to that an Italian restaurant, next to that a wholesale stocking establishment, and on the corner a jewelry store; but on the north side was still a row of half a dozen old-fashioned "brownstone fronts," and three of these, joined together, comprised "the Tarleton House," a boarding place which chose to be known as a "family hotel." It has no sign in front, and took no part in vulgar competition for trade; content to remain what it had been for thirty years, "a high class establishment catering to an exclusive clientele," mainly from the states south of Mason and Dixon's line.

In the waning sunshine on the front steps sat two young men, talking in the low, soft voices of Southerners. They were not troubled by the haze of dust and fumes of motor-cars, the occasional squealing of brakes and honk of horns; they were absorbed in the elucidating of a fascinating subject, the significance of imagist poetry. Jerry Tyler, who was twenty-one, was condescending to explain it to Kip Tarleton, who was eighteen. "They strive for a sharp, cutting edge. They want to get away from hazy emotions, and get their effects in clear-cut images, cold and bright."

"What I can't make out," said the younger, "is how they tell where to divide the lines."

Jerry explained patiently that the rhythm of the new poetry was not fixed in advance; it was determined by the content, and changed with the moods the poet was trying to express.

"I guess it changes too fast for me," said the other, humbly, "I never had anybody to explain it to me, and what poetry I've read is the sort that has rhymes, and anybody can recognize."

"You like to hear the bell ring—

"Keeping time, keeping time,
In a sort of runic rhyme."

"Gee, don't you like that?" queried Kip, naïvely.

"It's all right, only we know it too well," replied Jerry.

Kip Tarleton sighed. "I wish I could have got to go to college, and had such things explained to me."

"Is it too late yet?"

"Too late? Well, you can see how it is. I'm stuck here, it looks like it was for life. Father isn't a good business man, and mother and Aunt Sue work harder than any two women ought." He turned and glanced through the open doorway of the house, to see if anybody was seeking the services of clerk, porter, bell-boy, trouble-shooter or shock-absorber.

"Some day you'll get a chance and break away," said Jerry, firmly. "Where there's a will there's a way."

"I think about it, naturally, but I can't figure how. It might be different if I had talent, like you." Kip gazed at his companion, exhibiting a talent for admiration of which he was wholly unaware. "To come up to New York, fresh out of college, and get a job on a big daily—how did you manage it?"

"Mostly luck," said the lucky one. "The chap who taught me literature at Tulane had come to New York, and he happened to know a city editor, and got us together for lunch. So you see, I had a chance to speak for myself, and to shove in some stuff."

"Yes, but it wouldn't have helped unless the stuff was good," insisted the hero-worshipper. He rose. "There's somebody at the desk; excuse me."

II

It was old Mrs. Cardozo, who had come from Tennessee, and occupied with her husband the third floor back in number 37. She had just received her weekly bill, and had waddled down the two flights of stairs to explain to Kip that the item of $1.84 which had been paid on a C.O.D. package was an error; it should have been $1.64. Did not Kip remember how she had asked him to take care of that package when it came for her? Kip remembered; but the charge on the package had been $1.84; he would look up the slip

for her. While he was looking, the old lady was declaring in a querulous voice that it was positively $1.64, she remembered what the clerk at the store had said, it had been reduced from $2.50; it was a blue Japanese vase that she had wanted to send to her daughter in Nashville for a birthday present, and the clerk had said to her——

Kip found the slip, which read $1.84. "Then the store has overcharged me!" insisted the monotonous old voice. "I wish you had refused to pay the bill. Don't you remember that I told you the proper amount?"

Kip answered patiently that unfortunately he didn't remember, but that if Mrs. Cardozo would make complaint to the store, they would no doubt pay her the twenty cents. He wondered if it was up to him to offer to make up the loss out of his own pocket; anyhow, he had to be polite, so he listened while the old lady went over the story again: it was a blue Japanese vase that she had wanted to send to her daughter in Nashville for a birthday present, and she would have been sorry to have the package sent back, because there had barely been time enough to get it into the mail. But the item of $1.84 was certainly an overcharge, because when she had bought it, the clerk had said——

Again Kip remarked politely that no doubt the store would rectify the error. No doubt Mrs. Cardozo would be going back there again. "Never!" she broke in, emphatically. "I wouldn't deal with a place which sold me a vase for $1.64, and collected $1.84 when I happened not to be at home." She started for the third time to tell how positive she was of what the clerk had said at the time of the purchase. Kip must not show impatience, because Judge Cardozo and his wife had been living at the Tarleton House longer than he had been living on earth; the old gentleman's father had been a supreme court judge in Tennessee, while the old lady's father had been a colonel on the staff of General Lee. There was no "better blood" in the South than that which ran in the veins of the Cardozos.

She started for the fourth time: "The clerk said to me——"

But now Kip's patience was beginning to weaken. "I'm sure the store will refund it, Mrs. Cardozo. But if you feel that it's my error, of course I'll be willing to stand the loss."

The old lady's face softened. "Oh, no, Kip, I wouldn't think of that; but it makes me indignant that a big store should do such a thing. They ought to be above it. But it's not your fault, Kip."

Yes, she was a kind old lady; but also she was poor, and had

to watch every penny; the only reason she could afford to buy a vase for her daughter was that the daughter sent her an allowance. Kip knew that, as he knew nearly everything about the financial affairs of everybody in the Tarleton House; sooner or later they got behind with their board-money, and had to explain matters to his mother or his Aunt Sue. "Judge" Cardozo—it was a courtesy title—had some sort of insurance agency, and was hardly able to pay for desk-room, and of late had to get along without a stenographer.

Yet they were people of distinction, with especially good manners, and especially good blood! It was a problem you were always confronting, in conducting a "family hotel." Those who had manners and blood were seldom those who had money; and you were driven, by the pressure of everyday needs, to appreciate those who were able to pay their weekly bills without argument and without delay. Mr. Marin, who came from Spain, and was in the business of importing cheeses, was stout, and wore colored waistcoats, and laughed loudly, and blew his nose at the dinner-table; but he occupied the second floor front in number 37, and paid thirty dollars a week every Saturday night without fail; so it was hard not to respect the cheese business.

Thus it was that people's souls were made sordid; and Kip Tarleton wondered how his frail and sensitive mother was able to stand it. Always having to worry and fret, to watch people, and judge the state of their pocket-books, and squeeze money out of them—that had been her life, and his also—ever since he could remember. His mother and father had taken over the Tarleton House when he was seven, and he had been present at all the family councils, and early developed the feeling of having to help carry the burden. But always at the same time his mother had given him the idea that he was a Southern gentleman, and must not let himself be demoralized by living among the Yankees.

The South itself was being demoralized, he heard people saying. The Yankees were moving in, and setting up factories and offices, and people were speculating, and scrambling for riches, and getting the psychology of the vulgar rich. But whatever might happen, there would be one oasis of gentility left, this "family hotel" in the west twenties of Manhattan. Here the rent would always be collected with politeness, and you would hear about chivalry, and the superiority of Southern cooking, and who had been who south of Mason and Dixon's line. There would still be fried mush with

the chicken, and hot bread three times every day, and no such abomination as sugar in corn-bread. Here every gentleman would listen politely to what any lady had to say, even if she had said it three times already.

III

Jerry Tyler, of the staff of the New York "World," sat on the steps and finished his cigarette, listening vaguely to the conversation inside, and frowning impatiently. Lord, how much time these old Southerners had! Poor as she was, Mrs. Cardozo had nothing to do. And what a life for that poor kid! How did he manage to keep his temper, listening to complaints of old ladies whose fathers had been on the staff of General Lee? Jerry's own job was a bore, for they had put him on the obituary column, and he spent his time collecting data and writing up obscure careers. But at least he got a chance to move about!

Jerry was a reconstructed Southerner, who was teaching himself to say his vowels quickly, and to pronounce the letter "r." Lean and brisk, and full of determination, he walked about the streets of Manhattan, and while he asked questions as to recently deceased inhabitants, his sharp black eyes were roaming in a search for what he called "material." His mind was made up that he was not going to stay in newspaper work; he was going to achieve the feat known as "breaking into the magazines." There was a certain predatory aspect to his glance, under a pair of beetling, dark brows. Let him find his meat, and he would pounce upon it!

Old Mrs. Cardozo went upstairs, and Kip came out and resumed his seat on the broad top step, and his naive questions about the writing game. He was deeply respectful toward Jerry's vocation, and the older man found his admiration as pleasant as the October sunshine. He told himself that his affection for the youngster was based on pity; it was a shame for a fellow to be tied down to such a grind, a sort of general handy man in this old chicken-coop full of antiquated and broken-down aristocrats. But the fact was that Kip served as a shock-absorber for Jerry, as he did for all the other inmates of the Tarleton House. Kip could always be counted upon as an interested and admiring listener to comments upon the literary game, and to Jerry's plans for a part in it. If things went wrong, Kip would be sympathetic, as he had been to Mrs. Cardozo. When he heard about people's troubles—as he did every day of his life—

his forehead would pucker into a frown, the wrinkles, oddly enough, running horizontally. The shrewd Jerry recalled this as a characteristic of the monkey tribe, and entered the item in his mental notebook as a lively bit of description.

"Devilish job you have," he commented.

"I suppose it seems so," replied Kip.

"Seems to me you'd have murdered some of 'em."

"No, they are mostly kind-hearted, and honest. When things go wrong, it usually isn't their fault."

"Not if you believe what they tell you," observed Jerry, in the reconstructed, modern manner. During his six months' sojourn in the Tarleton House, he had many times speculated upon the value of this collection of obsolete Southerners as "copy." But he had decided that they wouldn't do; they were not really people, they were ghosts, living in a dead past; and Jerry was a modern.

That was the trouble with Jerry, as he diagnosed himself; he was apt to decide against too many subjects. He had the ability to see quickly through the shams and pretenses of things; after which, he was merely bored with them. That was why he had been so determined to get away from Louisiana, where he had been born; the old stuff—the "chivalry" and "aristocracy"—had long since decayed; while the "new South," the world of "progress" and "boosting," was as disgusting as the same kind of tripe in the North. During his college days at Tulane, Jerry had decided that college also was "the bunk"; culture, as they ladled it out to you in courses, whether in the North or in the South, was beneath the contempt of a true lover of belles lettres.

"The trouble is, my critical faculties are overdeveloped." Jerry was thinking out loud for the benefit of his young friend. "What I'm destined for is some kind of desk job on a magazine."

"Don't they pay well?" inquired Kip—who understood but vaguely the higher aspects of the literary life.

"Yes, some of them; but the trouble is, you read other people's writings, instead of creating things of your own. I watch myself—I start to feel an emotion, and in the middle it's checked by some kind of literary thought: what does this mean, what's the value of it, how would it sound in a book, and so on. Take this place, for example"—Jerry nodded his head towards the inside of the Tarleton House. "You've lived here most of your life, so you take it as a matter of course. I come along, and it's new to me—this cage full of decayed Southern gentlefolk transported to Yankeeland, and try-

ing to keep their gentility alive. They are like a lot of queer birds from the tropics, suddenly alighted in an Arctic landscape, and struggling to survive. So many pretenses, maladjustments, comedies, tragedies—Lord, Kip, if a Balzac were to come along and spend a few months in this aviary, you'd have a novel that would set fire to the town."

"Yes, I suppose so," admitted Kip, somewhat dubiously; he could not avoid thinking of certain distressing secrets, and the effect of publicity upon the financial affairs of his mother and father and Aunt Sue.

"But here I am," continued Jerry, "and all I get is the boredom of the damn thing. I think: Good God, if I had to listen to old Mrs. What's-her-name trying to get twenty cents off her bill! I hate the old lady, when I ought to be studying her. So it is that some day you'll see me sitting at a desk, self-assured and impressive, telling younger writers what's the matter with their stuff."

"There have to be editors," said Kip, consolingly.

"But I want to create!" exclaimed the other. After a pause, he added: "Roger says I can be *his* editor. And that'll be a real job. At least I won't be bored."

There was a pause, while Jerry's mind started onto a new line of thought, familiar to Kip. Jerry could seldom talk about modern literature without mentioning the name of his friend Roger Chilcote. "There's the poet that's got the real stuff! The sure-enough elemental impulse! Take my word, Rodge is going to knock them cold! Watch the newspapers—you'll see him make the front page!"

Roger Chilcote had been Jerry's chum at Tulane University. These two had "bucked" the solid phalanx of Philistinism that was called education in Louisiana. "Rodge" had edited a monthly literary magazine, which had climbed defiantly to the apex of "highbrow" art, and had been so tolerant of unconventionality that one issue had been suppressed before it saw the light of day. Now "Rodge" was buried somewhere down on the Gulf Coast, writing a slender volume that was to give a new direction to American poetry. When a letter came from him, Jerry would read passages aloud, and Kip would listen with admiration written all over his serious young face. If there were samples of the poetry enclosed, he would offer to copy them on the office typewriter, and would sit for a long time with the queer, horizontal wrinkles in his brow, trying to figure out what the poet meant by that singular juxtaposition of words, and where could be the rhythm which seemed to

change before it got started. But it must be something wonderful to awaken such enthusiasm in the sceptical Jerry Tyler. "Oh, boy! Isn't that hot stuff? Won't that knock them cold?"

IV

The conversation was interrupted by a gentleman arriving from the street. He was fifty years of age, broad-shouldered, florid, with hair dyed black; dressed in an ostentatious manner, and carrying a silver-headed cane with easy gestures. When he saw them, he waved the cane, and exhibited two rows of shining white teeth beneath a pair of black mustaches, also dyed, and worn in the generous style of his forefathers. "Good afternoon, Mr. Tyler. Good afternoon, son."

It was Powhatan Tarleton, proprietor of the "family hotel." He had been walking with an abstracted manner and worried expression of the face; but the moment he saw "company," he threw back his chest and began to radiate geniality. "What has happened to the New York 'World'?" he demanded, on his way up the steps of brownstone which led to the front door.

"Wednesday is my day off," explained the reporter.

"Ah, young man, I knew there was something wrong with the quality of the 'World' on Thursdays!" "Pow" Tarleton put such a wealth of good-fellowship into everything he said, you felt that you were the one person in the world who inspired him to real gaiety. Impossible not to respond to his cordiality!

"Mr. Tyler, I realize what a strain the literary life puts upon the nervous system. I once had the honor of knowing intimately the editor of our leading daily paper in Richmond, and he assured me that every editorial in that publication represented an expenditure of not less than a quart of the best Monongahela rye."

"That would sound conservative in a modern newspaper office, Mr. Tarleton."

"Well, sir!"—the coal black eyes of Pow Tarleton began to sparkle as if a fire had been lighted behind them—"Well, sir, I have in my locker just about two quarts of some old Kentucky Bourbon, that I get from a friend in the blue grass country, and if you'll just step back to my room——"

"Thank you, sir," broke in the other, returning the smile, but at the same time stealing a look out of a corner of his eye at the sombre

face of Kip. "Thank you, sir, but my doctor has forbidden me to indulge before dinner-time."

"My dear boy! You trust these Yankee doctors, that feed you on gruel and slops! Take my word for it, this stuff of mine will put the hair on your chest! Look at me, look at me, sir!"—here Pow smote the top button of his silk-braided waistcoat. "Young man, I've got the pelt of a bear under here! If I hadn't been born into one of the old families of Richmond, I could have earned my living in the side-show of a circus—the wild man from Borneo who bends railroad iron over his knee and bites nails with his naked teeth!"

Jerry smiled, but not with the proper enthusiasm; and one who had been born in Virginia, no matter how "wild" he might be, would never fail to realize when his charms were not appreciated. "Well," he sighed, "if I can't find companionship, I must take my consolation alone. I leave you to your literary themes, which are so far above my uncultivated head."

With another flourish of the silver-headed cane, Pow went inside. After he had entered his private room in the rear of the office, there was a silence; until Jerry remarked, "There's a character all ready-made for our American Balzac."

"I suppose so," said Kip; "but you wouldn't expect me to enjoy reading that book."

"Where does he get his Kentucky Bourbon, Kip?"

"Oh, at Sandkuhl's, round the corner. He keeps a bottle with an old label, to pour it from. I don't like to tell on him, but you might as well know, in case you're ever tempted.

"No, I'm cutting down on it," said Jerry. "This New York pace is fast enough anyhow."

"It's been too fast for father," said Kip. "I suppose if we'd stayed in Richmond——"

"Hell, no," said Jerry. "They don't guzzle it down in one gulp, but they have more time, so the net result is the same. Don't take it so hard, kid; you can't help your father."

"I know, I gave it up a long time ago. I'm trying to help my mother."

Kip's friendly blue-grey eyes had grown dark with pain, and there seemed almost to be tears in them. Said Jerry: "Don't let it get you, son; he isn't so bad as he seems to you. He makes himself agreeable. He's part of the atmosphere of this institution."

"Oh, sure, I know that. He's what they're used to; most of them

think he's distinguished. But I can't see anything to admire in the business of being good-natured and generous with your last penny, and leaving the worrying and saving to your wife. I often wonder why Mother doesn't drive him out. But women are funny. She lays down the law to him, but she won't allow one word of criticism of him from any one else. She even defends him to me; she explains that his pride was so hurt when he failed in Wall Street that he took to drinking for consolation. She actually blames the drink instead of blaming him for giving in to it."

"Some women are cut out for martyrdom," said Jerry; "and some women's sons, also."

"Well, shucks, when things have to be done, somebody has to do them, that's all."

"There's a sapient personage that writes a column in this rag of ours"—Jerry waved a copy of the "World," which he had rolled up like a club for purposes of gesticulation. "I'm told he consumes a good deal more than a quart for each paragraph; and he tells us this morning that responsibilities are what shape the characters of men; the overcoming of early difficulties made all the great leaders of history."

"I know," said Pow Tarleton's only son. "I wish I had that guy, to put him on the desk and let him answer complaints and carry ice water, while I finish typing those new poems of Roger Chilcote."

V

Kip Tarleton would not have talked thus frankly about his father to other persons. But youth as well as age craves someone to confide in; and Jerry was the only one in the hotel of suitable age and mentality. He came from south of Mason and Dixon's line, so he already knew Pow's type; the "professional Southerner," full of large, expansive phrases, of noble ideals derived from a vanished past, and wholly out of relation to a despised present; generous with things he did not earn, and even with those he did not own; a gambler and "game sport," free with whisky as with words; the soul of gallantry to ladies, and of bonhomie to men; delightful to those who had only to listen to him, and did not expect any real service or effort.

Moreover, there wasn't much use trying to hide your troubles in the Tarleton House, where the busy tongues of gossip saw to it

that everybody knew everything before the day's sun had faded. Three years ago, after Pow had disappeared on one of his protracted "sprees," it had been necessary for his wife to interview each and every boarder, informing him or her that Mrs. Tarleton was the true proprietor and manager of the establishment, and that all money was to be paid to her, and none to her husband. Thereafter, the husband could get only the allowance she made him, plus what he could bluff out of others.

The Tarleton family had come to New York soon after Kip's birth, and Pow's social charm had been rented out to a Wall Street bond broker, a business at which he made a success. But unfortunately he could not resist the lure of the market; he was a born "sucker," because of his conviction that he knew everything, and that his Virginia ancestry made him proof against the snares of despised Yankees. He was quickly "cleaned out," and thereafter the little family had to exist upon a slender patrimony belonging to the wife, and rigidly held on to.

The boarding-house had at that time been conducted by another man, who was old, and took Mrs. Tarleton as his assistant, in return for the family's board. When he died, she invested her belongings in the furnishings, good will, and lease of the establishment; and so Kip's destiny was laid out for him: to grow up in the presence of a thousand petty responsibilities, which renewed themselves every day, and fell upon the shoulders of anyone who failed to step out of their way.

At the outset of his life, Kip had considered that he had a marvellous father: full of fun and laughter, always ready to turn into a child, to run faster and shout louder than anybody; with an inexhaustible fund of stories about animals, Negroes, Indians—Pow boasted himself the descendant of an Indian chieftain nearly three hundred years back, and he possessed the costume of such a chieftain, which he had acquired for a fancy dress ball. He knew how to dance war-dances and whoop war-whoops, and having thrilled a whole ballroom with such stunts, he could hardly fail to delight one small boy.

But, as he grew up, Kip had been forced to realize that the Indian costume was eaten with mothholes, and the character of the Big Chief was in an even worse condition. Kip had had to see his mother crying, and hear her wrangling and fussing—and had to listen and decide who was right! Now, after eighteen years, Kip's attitude had become fixed; he was his mother's patient helper,

while for his father he felt a scorn which he put into words only now and then, when some fresh imposition came to light.

The Big Chief stayed on, because if he had gone anywhere else he would have had to sacrifice his status as a Virginia gentleman of the old school. He had free board and laundry, and every Saturday night a five dollar bill—unless he had managed to get hold of some of the money which was being taken in and paid out in the business. He would take his funds to Sandkuhl's, the corner saloon, and try to increase them by petty gambling; he would spend the remainder for whisky, which would sustain hospitality in his private "office" —a hospitality shrewdly apportioned to those who returned it in double measure. Thus Pow kept his status as an "F. F. V.," and was not too much ashamed of the boarding-house. Was it not known that the daughters of General So-and-so had taken in washing for a living at the close of the Civil War? A Southern lady or gentleman could do whatever was necessary, and never lose social standing with right-minded persons. And so Pow allowed his wife to do what was necessary. In order that he might not feel that he was shifting his burden to a woman's frail shoulders, he persuaded himself that he was the real master of the establishment, and that it was his prestige, his brilliance and social charm, which accounted for the popularity of the place.

Pow had a shelf of Civil War books, the contents of which he knew thoroughly. This made him a scholar—which was also according to the Southern tradition. He carried in his head the family-trees of the F. F. V.'s from the time of Jamestown to the present. He knew the name of every bay from the Chesapeake to Mobile in which oysters grew, and professed to be able to tell from which bay any particular lot had come. He boasted of having once eaten six dozen of the largest size, plus half a dozen quail upon a wager, and still preserved the silk hat he had won by this feat. He was an expert chef—provided that it was some expensive and fancy dish to be concocted: terrapin stew with sherry wine, wild turkey with chestnut stuffing, fruit cake soaked in brandy. When Christmas festivities came, or when one of the guests of the establishment had a birthday party, then Pow would expand to the proportions of Santa Claus, and romp all over the place, keeping people in roars of laughter. But if on an ordinary day his wife or sister-in-law Sue asked him to step round the corner and get half a dozen lemons, he would identify himself in feelings with Jefferson Davis chained in his prison-cell, and the whole South would quiver

with shame at the spectacle of a gentleman having to do menial work.

VI

Taylor Tibbs came through the open doorway, on his way to the street. "Hah'ye, Mista Kip, Mista Tyleh?"

"Darn your black hide, Taylor," said Kip. "Have you finished scrubbing that kitchen floor?"

"Naw, suh, Mista Kip, suh. Major Pennyman, he wants me to git him a pail o' suds. I'll be right back, suh."

"Taylor Tibbs, remember what I told you, if you drink out of that pail, I'll break every bone in your body!"

"Yaz, suh, Mista Kip, suh." The Negro's grin exhibited two rows of pearly white teeth, which he could have sold to some multimillionaire of the city for one of the millions. He was big enough to have picked up Kip and broken him—which was exactly what made the conversation so enjoyable.

"And don't you stand round in Sandkuhl's talking to that white trash!"

"Naw, suh, I don't have no truck with them white trash. 'Gimme two quarts o' suds,' I says, and home I comes!" And down the steps went Taylor, swinging his tin pail. It was a process known to New Yorkers as "rushing the growler," and if you carried the pail of beer yourself, you were declassed, and the place where you lived was a vulgar tenement; but if you sent a Negro servant with a pail, that was in accordance with the rules of all "family hotels."

"How have you managed to keep Taylor from the corruptions of Harlem?" inquired Jerry.

"We had to fire him a couple of times," said the other, "but he comes back. He's got no use for Yankees. The last time he applied for a job in a private home, the lady of the house told him to sit down while she talked to him, and Taylor knew that was the wrong atmosphere. 'I wouldn't work for no white woman what told me to set in a cheer.' "

"You'd think New York would knock that out of them in a week," said Jerry.

"It does, with most. You notice we employ white girls in the dining-room. We can't stand these wenches that have lived up north, and got too big for their breeches."

"It's a good thing to let the North have a taste of the Negro problem," remarked the gentleman from Louisiana.

"You bet," said Kip. "They can have my share." His eye was following the figure of the black man. "Look at that rascal, damn his hide!"

"What's he doing?"

"Looking back to see if I'm following him. He's bound to get a swig out of that pail of beer. I've caught him twice, and now he's on his guard."

"They're writing books about the new Negro world up in Harlem," remarked Jerry—with whom all topics led to books.

"So I hear."

"The niggers are learning to write about it themselves. It gives me a pain. Imagine critics writing learned articles about books of poetry by high yaller ladies!"

"Well, I suppose you can teach them any tricks, if you take the time," commented Kip.

"People here in New York are always looking for some new sensation. They've got a nigger actor on Broadway."

The two young men continued to discuss the intellectual life of Afro-America in this inhospitable spirit, until Taylor Tibbs came in sight again, with his pail of beer and wide-spreading grin. "The rascal!" said Kip. "He knows what he's done, and he knows I know, but I haven't got the goods on him."

"Where did he get that scar across his cheek?" inquired the reporter.

"A souvenir of some wench up in Harlem. I manage to keep him sober, but I can't keep him chaste." Then to Taylor, who was half-way up the steps: "Let me see that pail, you black rascal."

"Yaz, suh," said Taylor Tibbs, who was prepared for this procedure, having been making up his speeches all the way to Sandkuhl's and back. "I ain't had the cover off'n it, Mista Kip, I swear I ain't."

Kip lifted the cover. "Look at that beer, you bobtailed monkey! A full inch gone out of it! I'm going to kill you some day, sure as you're born."

"It's bound to slop over some, Mista Kip, suh. You can't carry no pail o' suds and not lose it, runnin' under the cover."

"I've given you fair warning about drinking the white folk's beer. Now I'm going to dock your pay on Saturday night."

"Hones', I ain't done it, Mista Kip! When it run out under the

cover, I wiped it off on my sleeve, suh. You know I wouldn't want to slop no suds onto the carpet."

"Go on, you rascal, take it up to Major Pennyman." Taylor stood there grinning, enjoying the thrill of pretending his pay was going to be "docked," although he knew it wouldn't really happen. "You get back to that kitchen floor," exclaimed Kip, "and don't quit until you finish it."

"Naw, suh, not unless'n somebody takes me off'n it again."

That was the way with Taylor Tibbs; somebody was always taking him "off'n" things. It was, "Taylor, come carry up this trunk," and Taylor would toss it onto his shoulder, and march proudly up three flights of stairs. It was, "Taylor, go get the laundry in room twenty-eight," or it was "Taylor, go see what's leaking in room twelve." "Mista Pow" would say, "Taylor, shine these shoes for me, quick," and "Miss Sue" would say, "Taylor, run down to the corner and get me a quarter's worth of corrosive sublimate. Those theatrical people in the west house have brought bugs into the room, and they are blaming it upon us." Taylor would go, and do what he was told, carrying with him everywhere that exhibit of pearly white teeth, made for smiles.

VII

The postman came upon his afternoon round. He always had a goodly supply of mail for the Tarleton House, a separate bundle bound with a leather strap. Guests who happened to be in the central room, known as the "office," would gather expectantly, while Kip performed his task of sorting out the letters and sticking them into a rack of pigeon-holes. There were two letters for Jerry Tyler: the first in a legal-size envelope, heavy and solid, with the name of a well-known story magazine. That would contain a polite but firm rejection-slip, so it was fortunate that it was balanced by another letter, postmarked "Acadia, La." Kip knew this hand writing at a glance; it was from Roger Chilcote, and Kip's blue-grey eyes followed Jerry wistfully as he went out to the front steps, opening the letter as he walked.

Kip himself couldn't go, because there was a letter for Mrs. Faulkner, in room 17, and he had promised to carry it up to her as soon as it arrived. She had been waiting for the past week, and Kip knew by the handwriting that it was from her husband, a travelling salesman. The wife was awaiting a check, and had been

promising to pay her bill the moment it arrived, and of course it was Kip's duty to make this possible. He took the letter upstairs, and Mrs. Faulkner, as conscientious as she was sociable, asked him to come inside and sit down, while she opened the letter, and read him bits of the news, and endorsed the check to the Tarleton House, and agreed that it was to cover two week's board, and that he might give her the change when she came downstairs later on, on her way to some shopping.

Kip returned to the office, and made out a bill for Mrs. Faulkner, and receipted it, noting on it the amount of the check and the number, and the amount of cash paid. He was not only a hotel-clerk and shock-absorber, but a banker on an extensive scale, and had to be able to appraise a piece of paper at a moment's glance, and estimate how large a proportion of it might safely be turned into cash. Mr. Marin, the importer of cheeses, was good for any amount, while young Stanley Dubree was on the blacklist entirely, despite the fact that his father was a leading lawyer of Memphis. There were all stages between, and a language of apology which you had to know, so as to render your decisions with a minimum of offense.

By the time Kip rejoined Jerry, the latter had read Roger's letter twice through. Kip saw at a glance that something serious was wrong. His friend's black eyes were troubled, and his brows were set in a deep frown. "Something terrible, Kip; Roger's father has killed himself!"

"Good God!" said the youngster.

"Went out into the dairy in the middle of the night, and severed the veins in his neck and both wrists. He was dead when they found him."

"What was it about?"

"Rodge doesn't say. No doubt it was drink; the old man had got to be a regular tank."

Kip was deeply shocked. He had never met any of these Chilcotes, but Jerry had told him so much about them that he thought of them as friends. Jerry had visited Pointe Chilcote, and had roomed with Roger during two years of college; he had pictures of his chum, and dozens of letters, and a hundred or two of alleged poems, all of which had been studied by Kip. Jerry had even read aloud Roger's comments on what Jerry had written about the Tarleton House and its youthful shock-absorber.

"What's that going to mean to him?" Kip asked.

"That's just what's worrying me. He hasn't had a chance to figure it out, of course; but he's reproaching himself that he didn't give more time to the old man, and try to keep him out of trouble."

"You can't do it, Jerry. A fellow can't manage his own father. It's turning things around. It only makes him mad."

"You ought to know about it."

"You bet your life I do."

"Rodge says only one thing. He says: 'It's going to mean more responsibility for me.' Naturally, it makes him feel serious."

"Will he have to stay at home?"

"That's what I'm fearing. By God, it'll be a crime if they make a fellow like that into a sugar-planter!"

"Will they try to do it?"

"Of course they will. They always do. The son is supposed to follow in his father's footsteps, and carry the family burden."

"But surely, a man of Roger's brains——"

"Oh, he's got human feelings, like all the rest. He'll be sorry for what he hasn't done. Mrs. Chilcote isn't much of a manager, I gather, and there's a younger brother and sister—so you see the trap is all set. Roger says that in the money way everything's gone flooey."

"It's hard to see how anybody could go broke in the sugar country, with prices where they are."

"Well, I suppose the old man was playing poker. He was a fiend for it, and not very skillful when they got him drunk."

Kip sat, lost in thought. "You know," he remarked, suddenly, "there's a crazy streak in us Southern people."

"Shakespeare says 'great wits to madness near allied.' They're geniuses that run off the track."

"That explanation will please them."

"Well, it's truth. Take your father here—he's some sort of genius that never found himself. If he'd been trained for the stage, he could have kept audiences roaring with laughter."

Kip smiled. "It would have had to be amateur theatricals. Don't forget that he's a Southern gentleman."

"Oh, my God, that Southern gentleman business! How glad I'll be when there isn't another one left on earth! Just think what it has cost our people! Half the genius, the talent of our nation has been smothered for fifty years under the weight of a phrase, invented to save the pride of a lot of conquered slave-holders!"

There was a reason for Jerry's vehemence, as Kip knew. The

young graduate of Tulane had had a hard struggle with his own family, for the right to come North and work as a common reporter on a newspaper that was renowned for sensationalism, and furthermore, was owned by Jews. And now Roger would have a struggle to become a poet, instead of a wealthy sugar-planter! Jerry Tyler lifted an imaginary wine-glass and exclaimed, "Here's to our fathers, the Southern gentlemen! To heaven with them all!"

VIII

A man came walking down the street, and turned suddenly to ascend the steps of the Tarleton House; a man of thirty or so, with blond hair, and face freshly barbered; his solid figure dressed with a crude attempt at elegance, in a brown plaid suit, with a tie having green and purple stripes and a diamond in the middle. Another diamond sparkled on one of the fingers of a large red hand; there was a half-smoked cigar in his mouth, and on his face an amiable and—strange as it might sound—a somewhat pathetic expression. For after all, a grown-up street-boy of New York may try his best to be elegant, but cannot get rid of the uneasy consciousness that there are heights above him.

"Hello, Kerrigan," said Kip.

"Hello, yerself," said Kerrigan, taking the cigar from his mouth and waving it in a gesture which had the effect of displaying his "sparkler."

"Mr. Kerrigan, meet Mr. Tyler."

"Pleesta meecha," said Kerrigan, and the two exchanged a clasp of undying friendship.

"Kerrigan's one of our 'finest,'" explained Kip.

"Indeed?" said Jerry. "In disguise?"

"I steal up behind 'em, Mr. Tyler, and lay the strong hand of the law upon them."

"And Tyler writes it up," added Kip. "Tyler's a reporter."

"You don't say?" The detective's face lightened. "What paper?"

"The 'World.'"

"'Woil's' a great paper," volunteered Kerrigan. "I read it every day. I like the 'Join'l,' too, only I don't trust that guy Hoist. He's a double-crosser."

"The 'Herald' suits me better," volunteered Kip.

"Yeah, 'Hurl's' all right; but what's the good o' payin' three cents, when y' kin read the same noos fer one?"

"I didn't suppose you'd ever pay for a newspaper, Kerrigan," smiled Kip. "Show 'em your shield."

They discussed the privileges and immunities of that body which calls itself "the finest," in the city which calls itself "N'Yawk." They spoke in terms of frank but amiable cynicism; until finally Kip inquired: "Well, Kerrigan, what have we been doing that we hadn't oughter?"

The "plainclothes man" grinned. "Don't blame me fer it. Orders from higher up."

"Well, what is it?"

"The boss is worried about the elections."

"Afraid the Republicans will carry New York State?"

"Well, they're strong up in the sticks; at least so everybody says; and if that guy with the pink whiskers should get to the White House, we'd have to pitch in and help the British Empire win the war."

"How the Irish of Hell's Kitchen would love that, Kerrigan!"

"We ain't a-goin' to let it happen if we can help it. We got to make a success of the O'Kelly Association ball next week."

"You want to sell me tickets, is that it?"

"I got a few founders' tickets, that we will trust to the right sort. You know, son, we take care of our friends—always and all the time."

"Sure," said Kip. "I got no kick. How much are they?"

"Twenty-five apiece."

"Holy smoke!"

"Well, we're spendin' a pile o' money on this racket; the decorations is goin' to blind yer eye."

"Of course, I'll have to take one," said Kip, none too cordially.

"We was expectin' the Tarleton House would be good fer two," said Kerrigan, firmly.

"I won't be able to use them, Kerrigan. I wouldn't dare trust myself loose in a place where they had so much free beer."

"Oh, sure, we'll see you get home, if it's needed."

"Yes, but who'd do my work the next day? Business is awful poor with us right now, Kerrigan. And don't forget, my father's making speeches in this campaign."

"I know that; but we all gotta do our share. Why, even I gotta take two myself—it's straight!"

"Yes," said Kip, "but really, I think you'll have to let me off with one."

"I was told to sell you two, son." The joviality had gone suddenly out of the detective's voice; his steel grey eyes were fixed upon Kip in a look which he had cultivated as part of the "third degree." "That's orders," he said. "You better see yer old man."

"Wait!" said Kip, and rose and went into the house, leaving the protector of law and order to pass the time with the moulder of public opinion.

"You an Englishman, Mr. Tyler?"

"No, I come from Louisiana."

"Well, I guessed it was some foreign place."

"My accent, you mean?"

"Yeah, you don't talk like you was raised here."

"Give me time," said Jerry. "I've only been here six months. I'm trying to lose it."

"That's all right," said the other, comfortingly. "You're doin' great."

Jeremiah Breckenridge Tyler, young aristocrat from New Orleans, kept his smile behind his lips. It gave him keen delight that a man who lived in what was called "N'Yawk," and read the "Woil," the "Join'l," and the "Hurl," should be supervising the pronunciation of a graduate of Tulane University!

Kip was gone some time; the reason being that his mother was having a fit of weeping in her room. But there was no way out, and in the end the youth reappeared, carrying a check for fifty dollars, which he put into the detective's hand, receiving in return two neatly printed "founders' tickets" to the O'Kelly Association Annual Dance. Kerrigan thanked him, and assured him that he would receive ample return before the year was over. Then he went down the steps, and crossed the street to the Italian restaurant.

"There's a high class hold-up for you!" said Kip.

"Pretty smooth," assented Jerry. "He didn't even trouble to get you alone."

"He hasn't anything to fear from either of us."

"What would happen if you didn't come across?"

"Hard to say. Maybe Taylor Tibbs has put the ash-cans out on the curb when he shouldn't; or maybe he sweeps the front steps after seven in the morning."

"But they all do that!"

"The cop has a little book in his pocket, and he can point to a

hundred city ordinances you never heard of. If you're wrong with the organization, you get a summons, and have to waste half a day sitting in a court-room with a bunch of Dagos and Yids."

"But listen, kid; I though this was a reform administration."

"Sure, but you can't reform the police. Remember, the reformers last only four years, and then Tammany comes back."

"Yes, I suppose there's no way to buck the game."

"If you get them really ugly, they'll put you out of business entirely. Take the plumbing; all the old stuff in this house is wrong. Some day along comes an inspector, and says we have to have a new kind of trap under our lavatories; or maybe our fire-escapes have to be painted."

"Does everybody pay as much as you?"

"We get off comparatively easy. Sandkuhl, round the corner, tells my father he pays a hundred a week. There's a bunch of laws against keeping the saloons open on Sunday, and keeping them open after one in the morning, and selling liquor to children under sixteen. The funny thing is, even if Sandkuhl wanted to be good, the police wouldn't let him."

"It's because we pass so many fool laws," said Jerry.

"Well," replied Kip, "I'm for any laws that promise trouble for Sandkuhl. I'd be glad of even one day in the week when my old man couldn't get liquor."

"That's easy to understand," countered Jerry. "But all such laws do is to pile up a lot more graft. You can't have laws that the people don't want to obey."

Thus Jerry, the wise one; and Kip, the naive, replied: "I hear people say that. But the trouble is, they can't agree what laws they want to obey. There are some who don't want any laws against burglary, and they gang up with the cops, and pay a lot of money. I suppose if you repealed the burglary laws, you might reduce this graft."

The reporter darted a quick glance at his friend; he reflected that maybe this "kid," who had lived in New York since he was six years old, was not quite so naive as he sometimes managed to appear!

CHAPTER FOUR · · MANHATTAN

I

FELLOW citizens, the proudest boast that could pass the lips of a man during the past hundred years has been: 'I am an American citizen! I am a member of that grand free commonwealth of sovereign states, which is the wonder and envy of all other nations of the earth.' And now, fellow citizens, the hour draws near, when it becomes our duty to exercise the most sacred of our privileges, to go to the polls and determine the destiny of this great Republic. You, free sons of America, are assembled to hear the claims of the Democracy, which has handled your affairs for the past four years, and asks your approval for another such period."

"Hooray! Hooray!" There were two or three cheer-leaders planted in the crowd, who gave the cue; others took it up, and Pow Tarleton paused, and bowed grandly, and waited gravely until the applause had died.

It was a street corner meeting on the Saturday night preceding election. The burly and broad-shouldered speaker stood at the tail-end of a truck, with a kerosene torch set up at each side. There were red, white, and blue streamers about the vehicle, and a banner with a star, the Democratic emblem. The place was just off Sixth avenue, far enough away to avoid blocking traffic, but not enough to escape the banging of street-cars and roar of elevated trains. But that did not trouble Pow, handsome and florid, exercising the sublimest privilege of a Virginia gentleman, to abandon himself to the intoxication of magnificent phrases.

In his time he had addressed assemblages of ladies and gentlemen down in Richmond; now, fallen from his high estate, he was forced to content himself with the riff-raff of a cheap neighborhood of Manhattan. But he told himself that it was the duty of a statesman under a democracy to help in the education of the poor and downtrodden. His deep baritone voice trembled, and so did his

black mustache, as he explained the gravity of the crisis now confronting the American voters. Did they want their sons to dye the plain of Flanders with their blood? That, and nothing less, would be the consequence of failure to sustain the Democratic administration which had kept us out of war.

The campaign textbooks so declared; and the orders to orators on the streets of Manhattan were to appeal to the foreign elements, to keep America from being used as a catspaw by the governing classes of the British empire. As a matter of fact, Pow would have found it more agreeable to support those governing classes; he called himself a "Cavalier," and despised the Irish and Germans, and other tribes which had come to this country for money, and had sold themselves to the Yankees to help take the slaves away from Southern gentlemen. But as a statesman, one had to be "practical"—which meant saying to the mob what the mob wanted to hear.

The yellow torchlights flared in the wind, and the faces of the auditors wavered and grew bright again; faces sober and earnest, faces leering, faces stupid; street-corner loungers and casual passers-by, working people from tenements to the west of the avenue, and white-collar workers from boarding-houses to the east of it. They were drawn by the lights and shouting, and stood to listen because it was more interesting than nothing, which was what they had before the meeting started, and would have when it was over. Election was a time when somebody unidentified was willing to spend money for torchlights and red fire, for red, white and blue streamers, for trumpets, cymbals, fifes and drums.

"Fellow citizens, the Democratic party is the party of the people. It is that all over America—but especially in New York. It is your own party——"

"What's Tammany ever done for the workingman?"

The interruptor was a young Jew, thin-faced and spectacled; Pow knew the type, and swept him away with a wave of the hand. "Go down the street, my friend, and start a meeting of your own, and tell the people what the Socialists have ever done for the workingman."

Before the jeering had stopped, the orator was going on to celebrate the glories of New York, the metropolis of the Western hemisphere; what a calamity, that this imperial city should be governed by blue-nosed reformers! The haven to which the rest

of America fled, the civilized community, the home of good-fellowship—New York should be a wide-open town, as free to all modes of pleasure as to the winds that blew from the ocean. Tammany Hall was the organization which realized this, and knew that you could not clamp the lid upon such a city without driving customers away and ruining business.

This matter of clamping on lids was one near to a Cavalier's heart, upon which he needed no campaign text-book to tell him what to say. He could talk from the tail of a truck with the same fury of indignation that he displayed in the office of his family hotel, when the gentlemen had assembled for their evening's smoking and card-playing. "My friends, I am descended from those men who wrote the charter of our liberties, the immortal Declaration which guarantees our right to the pursuit of happiness. I come of a race of men who knew the good things of life we were to pursue. Mine is a line of Virginia gentlemen—like that President on whose behalf I appeal to you tonight, a scholar from the Old Dominion, a worthy descendant of Washington, Jefferson, and Madison. My friends, we in the South know good eating, and we know good liquor, believe me; we know how to carry it, and don't want any bluenosed Puritans meddling in our affairs, telling us what shall we eat and what shall we drink. Fellow-citizens, I warn you of the peril that is hanging over this community; the forces of bigotry and intolerance that are organizing, seeking to prison this imperial city in the straight-jacket of a country village. Our nation was founded upon the rock of liberty; but these bigots wish to blast it. The hordes of Methodism are on the march, about to descend upon you. I see them advancing, an army of schoolma'ams, hatchet-faced old maids in spectacles and poke-bonnets, mounted upon camels; Puritan preachers in tall hats, with green umbrellas under their arms, sitting proudly upon the front seats of a battery of water-wagons!

"You laugh, my friends, and think you would like to see that spectacle. But I tell you, if you want to have this great metropolis turned into a backwoods village, with grass growing in its streets and goats nibbling the grass, yourselves out of jobs and your wives and children starving—all you have to do is to vote the Republican ticket, and let these upstate reformers get in, and set the police to invading your homes and meddling with your morals, your ways of spending your money and enjoying your hard-won leisure!"

II

The meeting at an end, the orators adjourned to the corner saloon, to recuperate their energies and prolong their hour of exaltation. All through the speaking, there had been a filtering into and out of this saloon from the edges of the crowd, and interruptions pro or con hiccupped or guffawed at the orators. If you had strolled the length of Sixth avenue, some fifty blocks, you would have found two-score such cart-tail meetings, each contributing to the prosperity of a saloon. In the fifty-odd street intersections, you would have found not more than half a dozen without a saloon on one corner, while many had saloons on two or three corners. Yet other drinking places were sandwiched in between delicatessen shops and drug-stores and pawn-brokers' offices in the middle of the block. Everything was arranged most conveniently: the bread-winner of the family spent his wages getting drunk on Saturday night, and on Sunday morning his wife would send to the drug-store for the means of sobering him up, and on Monday morning she would take his overcoat to the pawn-shop, and afterwards be able to buy a loaf of bread and a bottle of milk at the delicatessen shop.

Walking the length of Seventh avenue, or Eighth, or Ninth, or Tenth, you would find the same conditions; each block of brick tenements, into which human beings were crowded like African ants in a million-chambered nest—each had its over-supply of front rooms for making the men drunk, and of rear rooms for making the women and children drunk. If you preferred, you might go over to the East Side, and walk the length of Third avenue, or Second, or First, or Avenues A or B or C, near the East River, where you would find still more tightly-packed warrens, with drinking-places shabbier, more numerous, and more crowded. Most of these avenues ran for a hundred and fifty blocks, yet you might have walked their length, and counted but few street intersections which did not have one corner decorated with signs of "Lager Beer," "Bock Bier," "Wilson Whisky," "Haig and Haig," and so on.

On this Saturday night every saloon was doing a roaring business, with customers lined in front of the bar three and four deep, and seats at the tables occupied by those who were no longer able to stand. The places were steaming with the heat of stoves and of crowded bodies; the bartenders working with perspiration streaming down their faces, and such a reek of alcohol that one might be

mildly affected by way of the nostrils. "The saloon is the poor man's club"—so the newspapers never wearied of declaring, in comments sandwiched between high-priced advertisements of whisky and gin. On Saturday nights preceding election the saloon was the poor man's forum, in which he debated his problems, under conditions which made sure that he would remain a poor man, and have an unlimited supply of problems to debate.

III

Pow's companions upon this oratorical debauch were a shyster lawyer, who earned his living by getting petty offenders out of the clutches of the law, bribing judges and juries, and keeping his mouth shut; a police magistrate who took this lawyer's bribes; and a fire insurance adjuster who collected tips from small merchants after what were known as "bankrupt fires." Also there was a man who saw to the decorations and the kerosene torches—an employee of the street-cleaning department, who under the reform administration now in power was under the necessity of using a broom, but was looking forward to the return of Tammany, so that he might be able to draw his city pay while tending pool-tables in the club-rooms of the O'Kelly Association. Also there was the driver of the truck, which belonged to a trucking contractor who did work for the city, and was paid for the services of double the number of trucks he owned. The driver was working for this private boss, but looking forward to being appointed an inspector of eggs, at which job he could collect a double salary, one for working and one for failing to work.

They stood before the bar, with their feet on the brass rail—one Virginia gentleman on the way down, and five slum-natives on the way up. When they had had a couple of "rounds" each, they were all brothers in a great cause; the crowd which had heard them on the street and followed them through the swinging doors into the saloon, patted them on the backs, and pressed to the bar to honor and liquor them. Nothing was too good for these high intellectuals, who understood the problems of the world, and put their eloquence at the service of the masses. The crowd sang: "Hail, hail, the gang's all here," and also, "We won't go home till morning." The law ordered otherwise, the saloon being required to close at one a.m.; but in practice this meant that the front door was closed, and every-

body had to enter by the "Family Entrance"—even the policeman on the beat.

When Pow Tarleton had as many as three drinks, his personality expanded in marvellous fashion; he became an entire line of Virginia gentlemen, back to that Big Chief Powhatan who had welcomed Captain John Smith to Jamestown by preparing to knock out his brains with a club. He became the owner of vast estates, with hundreds of prime young Negro bucks and wenches as slaves. He became ambassador plenipotentiary from the Old Dominion to the merchants and counter-jumpers of Yankee-land, to teach them how to get true enjoyment out of life. He sang the praises of John Barleycorn, and filled the flowing bowl until it did run over—through his mustaches, down his shirt-front, and onto the sawdust floor of this poor man's club.

The poor men applauded and cheered, so long as they were able to understand what Pow was saying; and when they were no longer able to understand, each retired into a separate heaven, singing his own songs and making his own speeches, until he became too noisy, or too helpless to stand—whereupon an official of the establishment, known as the "bouncer," would take him firmly by the back of the neck and steer him to the street. The responsibility of the saloon ended when he had paid his last nickel over the bar; thereafter it was up to the police and the charity bureaus to look after him.

Now and then in this blissful throng you would note some child, who had slipped in by the rear door, and stood searching the place with frightened eyes; or perhaps a foreign woman with a shawl over her head. If they did not find their man in one saloon, they would go on to the next; stopping to peer at men who came staggering up the street, or who were vomiting in the gutter, or seeking an ash-bin or deserted alley into which to crawl. Some fathers and husbands, when found, were "weeping drunks," and would demonstrate affection; others were "fighting drunks," and committed the impropriety of beating their wives before they got home.

Such were the scenes one saw up and down the saloon avenues of that island of Manhattan, which the frugal Dutch had purchased from the Indians for twenty-five dollars. Now its virgin forests were gone, and instead there ran, in the north and south direction, seventeen or eighteen canyons with walls of stone or brick, and in the east and west direction some two hundred shorter and narrower canyons. Through these half-lighted and ill-swept passages you would see every night the revellers staggering, with here and there

a human wolf armed with brass knuckles or a slungshot, preying upon their helplessness.

It was the established rule of the "finest," the police who dealt with intoxication in those good old saloon days, that no man was drunk so long as he was able to keep his feet and find his way to the next bar. He was only drunk when he lay in a stupor in the gutter; or when he beat his wife before he got her home; or when he cursed the cop who told him to move along. Then and then only would he be subdued with a club, and loaded into a patrol-wagon, and dumped into a cell to "sleep it off." Next morning, if he could name some influential politician or lawyer, he would telephone and get himself released; otherwise he would be hauled to court by the wagon-load, tried in batches, and sentenced to "ten days or ten dollars"—a formula which the bored magistrates reeled off a hundred times in a morning.

IV

Sunday was the morning after, familiar to all believers in the sacredness of personal liberty. Pow Tarleton, the high priest of liberty, opened his eyes upon a hateful world, and raised from his pillow a head which behaved like a series of earthquakes. In his mouth was that taste which has a color—though the authorities disagree as to whether it is dark brown or green; all describe it as "fuzzy," and describe a thirst upon which plain water has no effect, and soda water or black coffee but little more.

For all these troubles the gentleman from Virginia had an "alibi" which served to maintain his dignity. In the good old days Pow had never had headaches nor brown and green tastes; the trouble was due, he declared, to the vile quality of the whiskies which were sold in New York. Real whisky had to be aged in the wood; but this stuff which you bought in corner saloons was aged with chemicals, and diluted with water, and raised to a higher power by raw alcohol. It was full of fusel oil and other deadly compounds, of which Pow knew the names; on the morning after, he would recite them to other victims of the "katzenjammer," who would nod their heads mournfully. The fundamental source of the trouble was the fact that Abe Lincoln had set free the slaves, and subjected Southern gentlemen to Yankee greed.

But bad as New York whisky was, Pow had to have some quickly. At times such as this he would be a raging lion, pacing his room;

he had been known to steal his wife's purse, or to carry off the clock from the drawing-room of the Tarleton House and pawn it. On this occasion he got hold of Taylor Tibbs; and Taylor, who was used to Southern gentlemen, and did not expect them to be different, displayed his white teeth in a grin, and went out and purchased a flask with his own money. He would never be paid back, but would "swipe" something to balance the account.

There was always an abundance of "katzenjammer" in the Tarleton House on Sunday mornings. While the ladies put on their best bonnets and patronized the fashionable Fifth Avenue churches, the gentlemen stayed in their rooms, or sat in the office, with Sunday papers strewn around them, grumbling and cursing life. When Pow entered the office, there sat young Stanley Dubree, white to the gills, and unsteady in his rocking chair. "Jesus Christ," said he, "I feel like the Day of Judgment." Stanley was the son of the Memphis lawyer, and had been sowing his wild oats for so long that his father bribed him to stay in New York; his board-money was sent to Mrs. Tarleton each week by check from the lawyer's office.

A few minutes later came Taylor Tibbs, with his irremovable grin, on his way to execute commissions. Mista Gwathmey, retired tobacco planter from Kentucky, third floor front in number 39, wanted a bottle of bromo-seltzer in a hurry; Mista Fortescue, from Charleston, who had had a poker party in his room up to three or four hours ago, now wanted a package of cigarettes, some brandy, and a bottle of Hunyadi water. So it went all morning and most of the afternoon; Taylor would collect his tips, and now and then hold some gentleman's head while he vomited into a wash-basin. Taylor would murmur his sympathy, and envy these wonderful white folks who were able to do what they pleased, without fear of scoldings from Mrs. Tarleton.

There was a book of British humor much in favor with our grandparents, known as "Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures." It consisted of a series of monologues, supposed to be delivered by a wife to her husband after she has got him safe behind the curtains of their bed. The wife does the talking, and her discourse is a recitation of all the offenses ever committed by a male brute. It made quite a volume, and the basis of its popularity was that known to students of esthetic theory as "the pleasure of recognition." Every wife had said everything that Mrs. Caudle said, and every husband had heard it. *"You don't intend to stay out till two in the morning?* How do you know what you'll do when you get among

such people? Men can't answer for themselves when they get boozing one with another. They never think of their poor wives, who are grieving and wearing themselves out at home. A nice headache you'll have tomorrow morning—or rather *this* morning, for it must be past twelve. *You won't have a headache?* It's very well for you to say so, but I know you will; and then you may nurse yourself for me."

Kip's early life had been like a reading aloud from this volume. For his mother was not one of those Southern ladies who submit and sink into inertia. She was a lean, high-strung little body, whose charms, whatever they may have been, had faded long ago. Her face was lined, and almost as grey as the little top-knot of her hair. Her mouth set tightly at the corners, and the range of vision of her troubled grey eyes was limited to the details of the housing and feeding of fifty humans, each bent upon getting the utmost possible for his or her self at the lowest price. Mrs. Tarleton suffered from frequent headaches, which compelled her to stay in her room with wet cloths wrapped about her head and a "smelling-bottle" to her nose. The rest of the time she roamed the three houses from morn till night, down one flight of stairs and up another, restless and anxiety-ridden, "keeping after" several servants and one husband.

Powhatan Tarleton was quite certain that it was "nagging" which drove him to drink, and compelled him to spend his time strolling the streets, or sitting in hotel-lobbies telling his troubles to other gentlemen of leisure. But he did not venture to say this in the presence of his wife, for it would mean a burst of tears and the pouring out of a flood of reminiscences. Once she had been a young girl, gentle, trusting, happy; and who had changed her? What had she asked of life, except a home for her loved ones, and a chance to educate her child? What did she ask now, except to work and slave all day, and be able to pay her bills, and keep her boarders contented, and not have the name of Tarleton disgraced and people driven away by the carryings-on of a drunken loafer? The good lady's language was inelegant and her troubles were sordid—but that was the way with marriage in the good old saloon-days of Manhattan.

V

Pow had to sober up at least partially, because on Monday he would be busy checking bundles of ballots, and on Tuesday watching

the vote, and counting ballots until late at night. It was a job in the gift of the Board of Elections, paying six dollars a day, and awarded for petty favors to the local machine, such as making speeches from the tail of a truck. So, for two days Mr. Caudle would be out of his wife's clutches, and on election night would have money for a manly celebration.

The Republican candidate, a former governor of the state, the gentleman whom Detective Kerrigan had described as "the guy with the pink whiskers," was a person of much prestige among the wealthy of the city. He carried New York State, and carried so many other states that on election night everybody thought him safely the victor. So it was the Republicans who did the celebrating, and Pow spent his money to drown his sorrows. All his direful prophesies plagued him on that evening of despair. The blood of our boys would dye the plain of Flanders, and the hordes of Methodism would take possession of Manhattan. When Pow had got drunk enough, he actually saw the advance of that army of hatchet-faced old maids in spectacles and poke-bonnets, mounted upon camels, and of Puritan preachers in tall hats, with green umbrellas under their arms, riding upon the front seats of water-wagons. Pow would yell loudly for Taylor Tibbs to come and drive them away.

Meantime, uptown in the fashionable hotels, the cafés and showy restaurants known as "lobster-palaces," where the proud Southern gentleman really belonged, but was too poor to go, the celebrating was done, not with beer and whisky, but with champagne. There the showers of confetti covered the floors, and little rolls of paper tape flung over the chandeliers turned the rooms into spider-webs of red, blue, and yellow, purple, green, and pink. The wine-bottles were borne in, each fat "magnum" in its bucket of crushed ice, and the "empties" were stacked upon the table or rolled under it. The music crashed and pealed, the dancers kicked their toes into the air, and when new returns were read aloud from the band-platform, there would be a din of yells and shrieks, and more libations poured into the slippers of chorus-girls, or perhaps down their necks.

That night the Germans were retiring from the last of the forts of Verdun, which they had taken and retaken a score of times, in a battle which had lasted several months. Millions of men were lying out in wind and rain, slowly freezing, now and then blasted by shell-fire or poisoned by gas. Here in New York men were making huge fortunes out of their agony, and celebrating the prospect of

yet greater gains. Speculators in shipping and munitions, owners of monopolies in steel and copper and aluminum, they had put up tens of millions to pay for the purchasing of votes, and in return had been promised tariff favors, and permission to violate laws against price-fixing; so now there was no extravagance great enough to express their emotions. During the small hours of the morning, you would see cloths jerked from tables, and glass and china crashing to the floor, in order that ladies stripped half-naked might perform stomach-dances on table-tops. You would see champagne bottles hurled through costly pier-glass mirrors, and the hurlers delighted, because they had found a new way to spend some money.

Meanwhile, on the streets, a solid mass of people for miles, blowing horns, whirling rattles and buzzers, tickling with feather-dusters the necks of women in front of them. Near the bulletin-boards it was impossible to move for a block; each new report would be greeted with volleys of cheers, echoing through the long stone canyons. As the evening waned, the searchlights on the towers turned red, symbolizing the legendary whiskers of the supposed victor. All drinking-places were packed, and on the side-streets it was like watching the stragglers from a battle.

But then, next day, it began to appear that the whole thing was a mistake, and would have to be done over again! Several states which had looked safe for Hughes began to swing toward Wilson. Election bettors who had spent their money celebrating the winning of it, now faced the painful need of paying it twice; the tariff monopolists who had put up fortunes would have to wait until 1920, and then put them up again. All day Manhattan studied the newspaper "extras," and in the evening the searchlights on the towers went white, symbolizing the political purity of Tammany; late at night there was a parade of bacchantes up and down Broadway, the parade going fairly straight, even though the individual paraders went crooked.

Pow Tarleton shared these glories, despite the fact that he had emptied his pockets the night before. This was an occasion when no Democratic "spell-binder" need go thirsty; when everybody was too drunk to know who had ordered the last round, or who owed the next. Pow fell into the arms of the shyster lawyer and the crooked magistrate, and sobbed for joy because our boys were not going to dye the plain of Flanders with their blood. He borrowed the tin-trumpet of a reveller who had collapsed on the bar-room floor, and emerged upon Broadway, tooting, and bellowing in

chorus: *"Four—four*—four years *more!"* He capered and kicked like a young he-goat, for joy that the metropolis of the Western hemisphere was not to be delivered over to the hatchet-faced old maids in spectacles and poke-bonnets, and the Puritan preachers in tall hats and green umbrellas.

VI

The postman brought Jerry Tyler a letter from the editor of one of the "highbrow" magazines, telling him that his sketch, "A Night Without Incident," was accepted for publication. The sketch dealt with "no man's land"; Jerry had never been there, and neither had the editor, but the latter wrote that the author's descriptive powers were admirable, and invited him to call. Jerry did so, and told about himself, and also about his Louisiana friend, Roger Chilcote, whose stuff was so hot that it was going to knock everybody cold. He read a couple of Roger's poems, and the great editor agreed as to their qualities, and offered to publish them.

So the reporter came back to the Tarleton House, walking on the roof-tops and skipping across the wide stone canyons. He told Kip the news, and Kip's heart leaped as if they had been his own poems. "Gee whiz, Jerry! That's great! Are you going to wire Roger?" When Jerry answered that he had already done so, Kip said those poems must be the real stuff. "But I wish I could understand them better," he added, wistfully, and borrowed the manuscripts, and spent an hour poring over them. However, the purpose of such poetry appeared to be to sort out the sheep from the goats; those who could understand the higher and more difficult things, from ordinary persons like himself, who were fit only to manage boarding-houses.

Anyhow, there were his only two friends with their feet upon the ladder of fame, and Kip got his share of life's joys vicariously. Jerry had been figuring how to lure the fascinating "Rodge" to New York, and now he said this would settle the matter—Rodge would surely not let himself be turned into a sugar-planter, but would march in and claim the prize which was his due. Presently came a letter, saying that the poet was trying to arrange matters. His uncles, who had the family finances in charge, might allow him a small income and his freedom. His brother, Lee, was preparing to take the burden of the plantation, and the sister, Maggie May, would look after their mother.

"What's Maggie May like?" inquired Kip, suddenly; and Jerry answered with a gleam of inspiration: "Just the sort of girl for you—I wonder why I never thought of it before! Quiet as a little mouse, and very serious and moral. You ought to go down there at once and marry her."

Kip flushed noticeably. "I'd make a fine suitor, with what I have on my hands, wouldn't I?" His reply sounded too emphatic.

"But that's your way out, Kip! Marry a rich wife."

"I thought the Chilcotes were ruined."

"Well, you know how it is with people like that; they talk about being in trouble, but it's not what you or I would mean by it. They can manage to get money when they have to."

"Thanks for the tip," replied the other; "but I mean to earn my way, and when I get a wife, I'll be able to support her."

Kip was thinking about his own mother and father, and that he would not follow in Pow's footsteps. But Jerry missed that point. "Spoken like a proud Virginia gentleman!" he exclaimed. "But, like the rest of the breed, you're fifty years behind the time, kid. The highest service a man can perform for a girl with property is to marry her and take care of it."

"Thanks again," said the Virginia gentleman. "But if it's a matter of business, she'll have to make the proposition."

"Well, that wouldn't be so unusual. You don't know what's happening in the world, Kip."

"I hear rumors." Kip tried to sound worldly-wise. "But such girls don't seem to come to the Tarleton House."

"For my part," said the up-to-date Jerry, "I'm going out and look them up. If any reasonably presentable dame will stake me to a literary career, I'll not be too haughty, believe me."

They discussed the ever-stimulating problem of love, and what they were doing about it. Kip, the sober and dependable, wasn't doing very much; he had too many other jobs on hand: such as getting up in the middle of this conversation to "check out" a departing couple, and receipt their bill, and wish them a prosperous journey to Georgia; or calling Taylor Tibbs and sending him up to room 7 to see what was the matter with the steam-radiator, which was producing vibrations of the wrong wave-length, noises instead of heat.

But Jerry wouldn't let the conversation be diverted. Jerry didn't approve of what he called "repressions," and he rallied the shy youth, telling him that love was a necessary evil. "You're abnormal,

kid! You ought to have a dozen sweethearts by now, and be wise enough so you can choose a wife."

Kip blushed and protested. What had he to offer a girl? "There ought to be a law against hotel-clerks' marrying." With such jesting he tried to hide his embarrassment.

Kip had grown up under his mother's wing; and Mrs. Tarleton's one romance had brought her such scant happiness, that she looked upon love as something at best very silly and at worst as dangerous and shameful. Kip seldom went out of an evening, and when he did, his mother waited up for him, and questioned him about everything that had happened. If a young and seductive looking miss turned up at the Tarleton House, the two managing ladies of the institution would eye her with suspicion, and would make in Kip's hearing remarks which sounded playful, but carried a deadly intent. He was a nice-looking boy, and girls would have liked to know him; but the utmost permitted them was to sit on a sofa in the drawing-room and engage in decorous conversation about the last book they had read. Then, just as Kip was coming to decide that this was the most interesting girl he had ever talked to, the fates would carry her off to Mobile or Nashville, Richmond or Atlanta.

Kip was used to this, so it never occurred to him that there was anything unusual about it. But now, in conversation with the well-informed Jerry, he learned that "repressions" were highly dangerous, and might lead to "neuroses"—which sounded most alarming. Continuing to probe, Jerry learned that Kip had been doing what was psychologically known as "sublimating" his emotions; that is to say, he was cherishing a dream of an all-perfect maiden, of unimpeachable Southern ancestry, who would some day come to the Tarleton House, and not have to go away again. "What else?" persisted Jerry; and Kip confessed that when he was walking on the street, and some unvouched for girl would smile at him without authorization, he would feel an alarming thrill stealing over him, and would hurry away from an unbearable temptation. "Aha!" cried Jerry. "Tell it all!" But that was all there was, Kip insisted.

He preferred to listen to his friend, who knew everything that was forbidden, and whose talk filled Kip with unholy curiosity mingled with fear. The handsome and enterprising Jerry made no secret of the fact that he had been doing not a little about love, first in New Orleans, and now in Manhattan. He revealed that there was a district known as "the Village," with great numbers of girls who were stage-struck, or had the poetry-bee, or the painting-bug,

or some other art-insect, and were on strike against marriage and "the ties of home." Many had paying jobs—did interior decorating, or wrote or drew advertisements, or did shopping on commission for the folks back in Peoria. If Kip wanted a self-supporting young lady to propose to him, all he had to do was to make his appearance in Greenwich Village; he was exactly the nice submissive type that some brilliant young feminist would select for a mirror, to see her charms reflected in.

"It sounds very economical and convenient," said Kip, trying to appear cynical; "almost too good to be true."

"It's only a mile away," said Jerry, with laughter in his wicked black eyes. "I'll take you to a studio party, and you can see for yourself. But you'll have to loosen up and take one highball, or they'll call you a victim of the Oedipus complex."

VII

The President who had been re-elected because he kept us out of war set to work at once to get us in. The notes exchanged between America and Germany became sharper in tone; and each was published in the newspapers, and became a theme of argumentation among the guests of the Tarleton House. After you had listened to any one person a few minutes, you could make a pretty good guess which newspaper that person read. In ten thousand boarding-houses on Manhattan Island, each inmate read some particular newspaper, and danced to some particular tune like a puppet on a string.

Jerry Tyler was another kind of puppet, known as an "insider." Jerry, shrewd and self-satisfied, watched the strings being pulled, and would tell how the atrocity stories were cooked up, and brought to the newspaper offices by this or that agency. All this war stuff was mostly "the bunk," and those who believed it were the "boob-oisie." Jerry would advise Kip to keep his mind clear. Yet strange as it might seem, if some critic started to denounce this newspaper "game," Jerry would immediately resent it, and declare that he belonged to a dignified profession.

Kip, for his part, didn't understand these complications. He could only say that the war was a terrible thing, and he didn't think we ought to mix up in the affairs in Europe. He was pleased with what Jerry read him from the letters of Roger Chilcote; Roger being contemptuous of militarists and their flag-waving, and telling amusing stories about his older brother, Captain Ted, who was such

a patriot, and flew into such a rage when he heard any real facts about the war.

Kip asked anxiously what would happen, in case we did get in. Would they compel men to go? He couldn't imagine what would happen to the Tarleton House, if he were taken away; his mother and his aunt would certainly have to quit. But Jerry told him not to worry—nothing of that sort could happen. There would be plenty of volunteers and to spare.

Jerry was given to making wide-sweeping statements such as that. He considered himself an ultra-modern, but his revolt was confined to the fields of literature and ethics. The swift and terrific changes which machinery was making in all human affairs had little reality to him. He had the comforting assurance that everything in the world was going to stay the way he had got used to it. He informed Kip that they would never see national prohibition in America. He was equally sure that the foolish efforts of the suffragettes would never bring results. When the Russian revolution started, he was sure it would come to nothing; when it succeeded, he was sure it would not last a year. When all these prophecies came to naught, Jerry would set to work with the persistence of a spider rebuilding the web in which he had been born.

VIII

Roger was coming! That was the real news Jerry read from a letter. The Chilcote uncles, in conclave assembled, had admitted their nephew's worthlessness from the point of view of sugar-planting, and agreed to allow him an income of four hundred dollars a month from his father's estate, with the right to go to New York and try his fortunes as a poet. Hearing this sum read aloud, Kip got a sudden realization of the nature of privilege. If he had been granted an income of four hundred dollars a month, he would have felt like an Indian rajah; but this heir of the Chilcotes wrote as if he were preparing to sacrifice everything for the Muses!

He was coming next week, and was to stay at the Tarleton House! Kip, who got his thrills vicariously, was in as much of a flutter as if he had suddenly become a great poet himself. What room would they lodge the poet in? Kip suggested the third floor rear in number 39, to avoid the street noises; but Jerry said, my God, no, didn't Miss Fortescue practice her singing right over that room? Roger would listen to her for three minutes, and then take a dive through

a window-pane. Kip said the only other vacancy was the second floor front in number 41, and that was noisy from the street. But Jerry said that everybody in New York had to get used to street noises—at least, unless they were millionaires, and could live in a "pent-house" on top of a sky-scraper. And then there were the airplanes!

Mrs. Tarleton was summoned, and they inspected the room. The furniture was rather old, Kip thought; but Jerry said that Rodge was used to old things. To be sure, the Chilcote furniture was mahogany, whereas this was the black walnut of our immediate ancestors, with all sorts of curlicues and ornaments fastened on with glue. The curtains, and centre-pieces on tables and dresser, would be "done over," Mrs. Tarleton explained; they would put in a better rug, and sweep and dust everything. The devoted lady bemoaned the fact that their landlord was stubborn, and had refused to redecorate these rooms in brighter colors. Perhaps if it was explained to him that a famous poet was coming to the house, he would consent to give the dingy woodwork a coat of cream enamel. Mrs. Tarleton went off, to telephone at once and try to persuade him.

Kip expressed his anxiety, because Roger was used to so much elegance; he would be ashamed to have his fashionable friends visit him in such a shabby place. But Jerry said not to worry; "Rodge" was "Bohemian" in his tastes. He was always collecting literary material, and was interested in "types." "Your father will make a hit with him. He'll think Pow a character."

"I know," said Kip. "People do; but after a while they get tired of him."

"Rodge won't. He'll take him round to Sandkuhl's, and they'll fight the Civil War all over."

Jerry explained Roger's theories. He was a combination of poet and scientist; one who not merely explored and discovered life, but who invented and created it. He was interested in everybody; he was never bored, like Jerry. He would sit for hours with the "Cajun" trappers, asking them the oddest questions: what they thought about God and immortality, fairies and ghosts, love, marriage, and the meaning of life. He would do the same thing in New Orleans in a wharf-side café, with French sailors, Negro roustabouts, sea-captains who brought gold from Venezuela or bananas from Costa Rica. Some day he would put such people into literature that would beat Joseph Conrad and Robert Browning rolled into one.

Genius, so Jerry gave his friend to understand, was a thing apart, remaining aloof from life, judging it as from a mountain-top; yet, also, it drew its wonder from the heart of life, it merged itself with life, and absorbed it to itself. Roger had had to break his own path, and find his own laws. Once, disgusted with the manhandling of poetry by college instructors, he had shipped on a freighter for Australia; but a seaman, thinking him some kind of anti-union spy, had shoved him through an open hatchway, and the magnificently rebellious poet had stayed in New Orleans to nurse a broken arm. Again, he had proposed to write an idyl about a Creole girl of the docks; but a fellow who was preying on the girl, not understanding the ways of poets, had gone after him with a knife.

Also Jerry told the dashing and romantic story of a time when he had been visiting the Chilcotes, and Roger with a couple of his cousins had been to a supper-party in the town of Acadia, and the four youths, under the triple stimulation of wine, women and song, had gone capering down the main street of the town in their pajamas. A terrible scandal, but only because they had been a few minutes too early. At eleven in the evening the picture-house closed, and respectable citizens went home to bed; after that the streets belonged to wealthy young roysterers, to sing and dance, and steal signs, and smash street-lamps which their parents would pay for next day. But here the pajama-dancers had encountered a party of ladies and gentlemen emerging from Toni's "Dago Hut," where you got fried oysters and crayfish bisque after the show. So the town marshal had set out after them, and they had escaped after a chase, which, as Jerry told it, sounded like the climax of a Griffith movie. It troubled Kip, the sober and responsible one; he didn't want anybody capering about the Tarleton House in pajamas. Pow might take a notion to adopt the fashion!

IX

Roger Chilcote's train arrived at eight o'clock in the morning, an unlikely hour for a newspaper man; but Jerry was up, and waiting at the Pennsylvania station. Also several of the boarders managed to find excuse to be sitting about in the office; not since the Count Rzewuski from Poland had arrived, had there been such a flutter in the Tarleton House. Roger had everything calculated to stir the souls of Southern boarders: ancient lineage, the background of wealth, good looks, and just enough of scandal to supply a dash of

pepper and spice and all things nice. No one in the Tarleton House could make anything out of the alleged poems, but they had been told of the great editor's opinion, and were ready to believe that a new star was rising in the Southern sky, to shine beside William G. Simms and Francis Ticknor.

The first snow of winter was falling, and through the sifting flakes Taylor Tibbs, on watch at the basement window, saw the taxicab draw up at the curb. Out he popped through the iron-barred gate, grinning, and showing his prize teeth.

"Mista Roger, suh, how de do, suh, we sho' are glad to see you, suh." Roger got his long form out of the cab, and insisted upon paying the fare, and they went up the steps, Jerry first, then Roger, then Taylor, carrying two big suit-cases of brown leather, and a brown hat-box. Jerry pushed open the door, and there, in the big double parlor called "office," were Pow and Mrs. Tarleton and Kip beaming a welcome, and a collection of boarders in the background, trying to look as if they were not staring.

"This is Mr. Chilcote, Mrs. Tarleton," said Jerry; and the weary, worn landlady smiled as if there were still real joy in her heart. "It's nice to have you with us at last. Mr. Tyler has told us so much about you." "Oh, thank you, Mrs. Tarleton," said Roger—in one of those caressing Southern voices that have in them the romance of a long-dead past and the longing for an impossible future. Mrs. Tarleton, lined and haggard with care, worn to skin and gristle by unceasing travel up and down the steps of three houses, felt suddenly as if she was back in her girlhood.

"Mr. Powhatan Tarleton," said Jerry, and Roger shook hands with the "old rascal," as he mentally dubbed Pow at the first glance. You could see the old rascality by the twinkle in Pow's eyes and the pouches under them; by the fun that never failed when he was in company, and the touch of rakish effect he managed to give to his faded attire. "Welcome to our city, suh! This is Yankeeland, so I speak in the fashion of the go-getters!"

"Don't spring it on me too fast," laughed Roger. "Welcome me in Southern fashion."

"It's waiting for you," said Pow, with a wink. "You shall have it in your room."

"And here's Kip," said Jerry. Roger turned and gazed into a pair of friendly blue eyes, full of naive adoration.

"Well, Kip!" he said, as if they were long-parted brothers. "I got all your messages."

"And I got yours. Thank you." Kip wasn't sure if he would be expected to say "Mr. Chilcote," so he said, again, "Thank you."

Roger was going to take them to his heart at the first hour. He continued to smile at the younger man. "So this is what you look like!" he said; and Kip blushed, embarrassed because he knew he didn't look like anything special.

Said Roger, in that voice full of romance: "He has that clear skin and bright complexion which nature presents to anyone at the age of nineteen. He is trusting, and interested in other people—not just as a hotel-clerk trying to make money out of them. He is serious, and easy to tease, because he takes you at your word. If the word is puzzling, he fixes his grey-blue eyes upon you, and on his forehead appear horizontal wrinkles, deeply graven—the marks of responsibility too early. Have I got him right, Jerry?"

"I told you he was a genius, Kip!" laughed Jerry.

Kip was returning the compliment, making his own examination. He saw a demi-god looking down from a height of six feet-two, with golden hair which was permitted to form an aureole about his head, and the strangest golden-brown eyes looking straight into his. Roger stooped a little, as if he did not want to be so far above Kip; he wore gold glasses, a badge of his profession. He carried a soft brown hat, and a rosewood cane, and wore a brown overcoat so soft and smooth that it was like a caress. As Jerry had said, this was no poet in a garret, but an elegant young aristocrat who had come to confer social éclat upon the Muses.

Jerry Tyler saw the guests waiting to be introduced, and decided to spare his friend that ordeal before breakfast. "Mr. Chilcote wants to get cleaned up," he said, to Mrs. Tarleton; and Roger, getting the point, added, "I've been on the train two days and two nights." So, with Mrs. Tarleton leading the way, they went through the doorway which led to number 41, and up one flight of stairs. Pow Tarleton disappeared into his private office, for a purpose which any Southern gentleman could guess.

X

The second floor front had been put in order. The old walnut furniture had been oiled and rubbed, until every separate curlicue and glued-on carving shone. There were freshly laundered curtains and centre-pieces on tables and dresser, and some pink carnations in a vase, and by the reading-lamp half a dozen volumes by the

newest creators of the new poetry, selected by the up-to-date Jerry.

"It's not what you have been used to, of course, Mr. Chilcote," said Mrs. Tarleton; "but we will do our best to make you comfortable."

"It's exactly what I want," declared the poet, decisively.

At the rear of the room were double portieres, and behind these a smaller room, with the brown walnut bed, neatly covered with a new pink spread. Beyond that was a passage containing built-in shelves and closets, and an old-fashioned marble wash-basin. It was a misfortune that the moment of Roger's inspection of the wash-basin should have been chosen for the same purpose by a small cockroach, politely known as a "croton-bug." Impossible to eradicate these creatures from houses built before the Civil War; one would only politely ignore them—which Roger Chilcote understood without having to be told.

They returned to the front room, where Taylor Tibbs had set down the two suit-cases and unstrapped them. Taylor drew up the curtains at the windows, the ritual established for introducers into rooms, and then stood smiling with anticipation. When Roger reached into his pocket and fished out half a dollar, Taylor's smile revealed his third molar teeth, and he went downstairs to "Mista Pow's" private office, according to an injunction previously laid upon him. A couple of minutes later he reappeared at the door of the room, this time preceded by his master.

Roger was occupied in inspecting the books of poetry, and thanking Jerry for them; when in came the descendant of the Big Chief Powhatan, beaming mischief, and behind him the Negro with a tray, decorously covered by a large napkin. "I promised you Southern hospitality," said Pow. "Here she are!" The tray was set down, and ceremoniously unveiled, and there was a full decanter, a steaming pitcher of hot water, a small sugar-bowl, a saucer with some slices of lemon, another with some sprigs of green mint, and three clean glasses. "You had a cold ride in the taxi," said Pow. "I assumed you would like it hot."

"Gramercy, mine host!" cried Roger. "You are too kind! But what magic is this—mint while the snow flies!"

"A little secret of mine," beamed Pow, busily mixing. "Some day, if you prove yourself worthy, I may entrust it to you."

Roger took the glass which Pow held out to him, and turning with a bow and a smile, offered it to Mrs. Tarleton. "Allow me," he said.

"No, thank you," the old lady replied. She did her best to keep her voice pleasant, as became a hostess; but she had an intense repugnance to all drinking, especially on the part of her husband. There was no charm for her in any of his gestures, or his florid phrases of good fellowship.

"My wife and my son have been corrupted by their sojourn in the land of the bluenoses," said Pow, to pass off an awkward moment.

"Oh, surely this once, Mrs. Tarleton!" pleaded Roger. "Just to assure me that I'm really welcome?"

"No, really, Mr. Chilcote, it gives me a headache." Roger accepted the polite fib, and turned to Kip.

"And you?" he asked, gravely.

"No," said Pow's son. "I'm on the wagon." He smiled and tried to seem casual, but in his heart was vexation, because he and his mother were taking the flavor out of the "hot toddy," and spoiling Roger's welcome.

But what could Kip do? Could he break the promise he had long ago made to his mother? He knew the story of her sufferings; she had had a father who was a "drinking-man," before acquiring a husband who was a "drinking-man"; if now her son had begun throwing dice with the devil, as she called it, the poor woman would have cried her eyes out, and lain down and died. No, he could not do it, even "just this once"! Here and everywhere, he had to be a wet blanket, a kill-joy, a spoil-sport, a mollycoddle.

XI

Mrs. Tarleton made her polite excuses, and retired, closing the door behind her, and leaving poor Kip to hang about on the edge of the scene. He would do the best he could to hide his chagrin; putting on his face a smile of the right degree of amiability, and attempting to increase its degree to match the rising social temperature, while his father and Jerry and Roger laughed and told funny drinking stories. He didn't know what to say, or how even to get out of the room gracefully; nor did they know what to say to him. He was standing there, judging them, self-righteously. Even if he wasn't, they would think he was—which came to the same thing.

Kip was lonely for the companionship of men younger than the boarders of the Tarleton House. He had been looking forward to the arrival of Roger, as a debutante to her first ball. Roger the gay,

the warm-hearted, the brilliant and versatile! Roger, who had everything that Kip would have liked to have! Kip had been dreaming that Roger would like him, and take him into his literary confidence, as he did Jerry! But now he decided that it could never be. Roger was a man of the world, used to having a good time according to the ways of the world; Roger was a "Cavalier," while Kip was some kind of freak, a prude, a cold potato, a boiled strawberry —or any other old name that Roger, with his gift of language, would think of!

Roger knew all about the mixing of toddies, and the color and flavor of good whisky. He and Jerry sampled Pow's—which had been got at one of the high-priced hotels for this occasion; Roger declared it good, but he had something the like of which could never be got in the land of the Yankees. He dug into one of the suitcases, pulling out silk pajamas and embossed silver toilet-articles, and produced a quart bottle. Pow inspected the label and date, and his eyes opened wide; Roger assured him it was real, having come out of his grandfather's cellar.

So they mixed a new concoction of this enchanted "water of life," and sampled it with many sips and smackings and exclamations. They held it up to the light, and made wise and learned remarks about it—drinkers' talk, which means so much to the drinkers, and is such inanity to those who don't partake. The liquid fire began to work at once—since it was early in the morning, and all of them had empty stomachs. They became lighted up internally, and warmed each to the others; they were glad of the others' presence, and promised a continuance of this gladness, and discussed how they would drink some more, and where they would get it. Pow would show Roger where to buy English ale on draft, and Roger would send home to New Orleans for a case of real gin, such as they made down there from their black molasses, grown in the "Sugar-bowl of the World."

And meanwhile, Kip continued to stand and reflect upon the sad fate of the non-drinker in a world of conviviality. Never having tasted "the stuff," he had no knowledge of the stimulation it gave, nor of the physical temptations, the craving for more. But there was another temptation, the torments of which he knew to the full: the desire for friendship and companionship, the need to be like others, so that they would not spurn him, and so that he would not spurn himself. Yes, Kip hated himself, because he was set apart from these other young men. He discovered that it is an altogether

odious thing to set yourself up as superior to your fellows, sitting on a judgment throne and looking down on their follies.

There seemed to be a curse upon the lives of men and women, that they could not meet anywhere, and be happy or sociable, without drink. Kip couldn't go to Greenwich Village, and meet girls who might be interesting—because, as Jerry had said, they would expect him to "loosen up and have a highball." He wouldn't be able to go for a walk with Roger Chilcote and talk about modern poetry; for presently Roger would want to stop in a saloon, and have a glass of beer at the bar, and some pretzels and cheese at the free lunch counter. Kip would take a ginger-ale, and then Roger would think he was sitting in judgment! No—he had to face the fact, that wherever a "teetotaler" went, even with an "intellectual" such as Roger, he would be a wet blanket, and so he had better stay at home behind his desk, and keep his cash-record straight, and carry up hot water for those guests who wanted a toddy, or cracked ice for those who wanted a cocktail.

Such was Kip's thought, while he stood, and did his honest best to keep on smiling. Until suddenly Roger—the shining one, blest of the gods, who knew all human beings, and their secret thoughts and griefs and heart-breaks—Roger set down his half-emptied glass, and left the revellers and their stories, and came and put his arm into Kip's. "Camerado," he said—so warmly, like a caress—"this is too much on an empty stomach! Take me down, amigo, and give me some breakfast. Could I get some real Southern cornbread without sugar? Or maybe flannel-cakes? Or fried chicken and grits?"

CHAPTER FIVE - - - *PROHIBITION*

I

THE progress of Roger Chilcote in the literary world began immediately upon his arrival in the metropolis. The magazine editor invited him to lunch, this being the customary form of tryout, requiring little time or expense; if the candidate is found not acceptable, the editor explains that he eats very little, and has to get back to the office early. But Roger, at once scholarly and elegant, met all the tests; so he was invited to dinner to meet the editor's wife, and also the wife of a wealthy publisher, an eager and ambitious lady who acted as a literary scout. She was content to take the editor's judgment as to the quality of this candidate's "stuff"; what she was interested in was his mop of golden hair, properly subdued, his charming smile and soft Southern voice and perfect Southern manners—the indefinable atmosphere of aristocracy which hung about him. The lady knew he was a "winner," and went back to her husband, raving over her find, and began to make plans for a "literary tea" on the birthday of his first volume.

As for the poet, it was a wonderful thing when he signed a contract for the publication of his first book. It was like having a laurel wreath set upon his head. The rumor spread that this was the future conqueror, and those who prided themselves upon being one step in advance of the public came crowding to meet him. He was invited to other dinners, and to the "literary teas" of other celebrities. This was a sort of semi-public entertainment, gradually coming into fashion; given by the publisher for the purpose of introducing a new writer to those critics and reviewers who were to discuss his book. For the writer, it was a chance to manifest his personality; for the reviewer it provided those personal details which turn a dull article into a lively chat. Since there were a hundred persons who would read about an author for every one who would read his book, attending tea-parties became part of the business of literary journalists. The affair was given in a fashionable place, and cost a lot of money, and on the part of the publisher was an

advertising stunt. But then, so were most of the affairs given in New York.

All this "tickled" Roger; he would meet the literary lights of the metropolis, observe their manners, absorb their wisdom, and store up impressions for a book that would be Henry James and Marcel Proust rolled into one. (Roger had a way of changing his literary masters according to his mood.) He would come into the Tarleton House at one o'clock in the morning, after a dinner dance or a studio party; full of excitement and eloquence, as well as of punch and cocktails, and unable to go to sleep without telling his adventures to somebody.

It was hard on Kip, who had to get up at seven, no matter what novel became a best-seller or what celebrity came to town. But he could not miss such conversation, more thrilling than any best-seller on the book-stands. He would sit at his post in the office until he fell asleep, and when Roger and Jerry came in they would wake him, and the trio would repair to Roger's room, and spread themselves on the bed, or in chairs with their feet on the table. Jerry also had news to tell, for his descriptive talents had been recognized, and he was off the obituary column and on "war stuff": tracing down hair-raising rumors about German secret agents, the munition plants and ships they were blowing up, the money they were paying to newspapers and public men.

II

So, things between Roger and Kip had turned out all right. The poet soon got used to the "kid's" queer, shy ways. He didn't care in the least if Kip refrained from drinking—provided that Roger might drink and talk, while Kip listened and manifested admiration. Every writer needs two audiences—a great one for the utterances which he thinks worthy of immortality, and a smaller one for the casual pearls which drop from his lips hour by hour. Usually a wife fills this minor role, but Roger made jokes about marriage, and was satisfied with his two cronies.

So the assistant manager and head clerk of the Tarleton House lived a double life. All day he sat at a desk and met the practical needs of a swarming human hive, packed from three basements to three garrets with regular boarders and war-visitors; and then in his spare moments he fled away to a dream-world of spies and secret service agents and munition magnates and ship captains and labor

leaders and what not; also a host of shining figures from the world of fashionable letters: authors of best-sellers, male and female—the most unexpected persons who had arrived from unheard-of portions of the world with a new thrill tied up in a paper parcel. It might be a gawky youth off a farm who had written a fiery love-story about ancient Egypt, or a sweet young thing with a school-girl simper who had been studying the sex-customs of cannibals. Perhaps it was a prizefighter turned poet; or an old roustabout reporter with a story of gangland; or an elderly college professor with a scandalous biography of the mistress of a king. Impossible to guess what the next sensation might be; the publishers paid fancy salaries to experts who were supposed to guess, but they rarely did.

For everyone who succeeded there were a hundred who would try and fail; all pushing and scheming, seeking some way to win the favor of critics and publishers, to make themselves known, to become members of the literary set. Conversation in New York, as Roger described it, was a sort of archery practice, everybody trying to hit the bull's-eye, perhaps with a belly-shaking witticism, perhaps with a soul-withering cynicism which the town would be repeating next day. There was no limit to the size of the treasures to be won, the prizes of success; the limit to the penalty of failure was suicide in a garret or the river.

Through this crowded market-place rode those mighty rajahs, the critics and reviewers, the writers of "culumes" for the great newspapers, watching the antics of the performers and passing their sentences of life or death. There rode the masters of the show, the traders who gambled their money on this celebrity or that, and were watching like birds of prey for every sign of new salable qualities. They were spying on one another, and bidding for the popular favorites; they were studying reviews, trade reports, every sign of the shifting currents of public taste which would bring wealth and power to a few of them, and obscurity and ruin to others. Kip marvelled how it was possible for any human being to survive in that maelstrom, the book-world as Roger Chilcote portrayed it.

Yet Roger was going to survive! Roger knew that he had "the stuff"; Roger was young, and full of daring—like a lumberjack rafting logs in the spring, leaping lightly from one place of peril to the next, and not even getting his feet wet. Roger, the irrepressible, could stand any pace; he could go to teas in the afternoon and drink fiery punch, and then dine at the home of some wealthy huntress of literary lions, and there start off with cocktails, and con-

tinue with a new wine at every course, and brandy with the coffee, and whisky and soda through an evening of dancing or conversation. Then he would come home after midnight, and have a "night-cap" or two, and go to sleep, and wake up at noon or later, and have a couple of cups of black coffee, and sit at his writing-table, and have the Muse come into his chamber, rustling her shining robes, and touching his forehead with her magic wand. Roger was sure he would always be able to do this; he was one set apart, lifted above mortal weakness. He belonged to a generation which had sat at the feet of a Viennese physician, and learned from him that there is only one evil in the world, which is the fear of evil. At least that is what the generation thought it had learned. If it had misunderstood the Viennese physician, it was the generation's hard luck.

III

Some years before Roger was born there had come to New York an aged Chinese statesman, reputed to be the richest man in the world. The newspapers of the city wanted to know about him, and he in return wanted to know about this strange new land. He would ask the most disconcerting questions: how do you get your money, and what do you eat for breakfast, and have you ever committed a crime? Of some matron of the most exclusive circles he would demand: do you cohabit with your husband, and if so, how do you keep from having babies, and if not, does your husband keep a mistress, and what do you do about it? To be asked such questions by an elderly mandarin with a long white beard and a robe of golden silk with scarlet dragons and purple peacocks—this made a delightful scandal for the ladies of smart society.

It was in this manner that Roger Chilcote took the Tarleton House by storm. He wanted to understand life, he said, and it was everyone's business to tell him, because he was a poet, and poets were above the laws of mere politeness. If you entrusted your secret thoughts to him, they might some day appear transfigured, in an immortal masterpiece of poetry. This egotism shocked people; but then, most persons were in their hearts convinced that their stories were worthy to be immortalized; so the boarders of the Tarleton House found Roger Chilcote almost as exciting as if he had been the richest man in the world.

He insisted upon being a friend to everybody, holding himself

above the feuds and antagonisms of this swarming hive. He would win Kip's aunt by praising her tea-cakes; he would hail Kip's mother as "the city's most perfect hostess"; after which he would take Pow around to Sandkuhl's and sit him at a table and order him a drink, and pump him dry of Southern reminiscences, and woman stories, and experiences in the petty politics of Manhattan. Roger wanted to know all about this imperial city, and he had Pow introduce him to the rulers of the district.

For example, Judge O'Toole, that Tammany police-magistrate with whom Pow Tarleton had celebrated four years more of Democracy. Roger sat in Sandkuhl's with the judge, and drew from him the life-story of a half-starved child, brought up in an inside tenement-room by a washerwoman who wore her fingers to the bone. The boy had got his start because he worked in a printshop, and discovered that this shop was preparing examination papers for a law school; for years he had kept his sick mother alive by selling these papers to students. Realizing how easy it was to become a lawyer—"If those mutts could do it, I knew I could"—he had saved up his stealings and studied at night, and passed an examination honestly—so he insisted. The tears rolled down the stout Irishman's purple cheeks while he told the great grief of his life, that the poor old washerwoman had not lived to share his present wealth and glory.

And then Detective Kerrigan, of the large diamonds and the green and purple tie! Roger and Kerrigan "took to" each other the moment they met; they had something in common, something flamboyant and highly colored. They made a date for that evening, and Roger broke a dinner engagement with a visiting British celebrity, and never regretted it—for what should he discover in "Slip" Kerrigan but a fellow poet! All his life "Slip" had cherished a secret dream of writing verses—only he had so much trouble in finding the rhymes. But here was this high-brow authority, assuring him that in modern poetry you didn't have to have rhymes at all! You just wrote it the way it came, and people knew it was poetry because the lines were shorter than the page would carry.

So delighted was this young "plainclothes man" that he "loosened up" and told Roger the inside story of the politics of his part of Manhattan—all in confidence, of course, not to be passed on to Jerry Tyler, who might put it into the "Woil." "Slip" knew, because it was his job to collect tribute from brothels and gambling-houses and saloons. He told how the money was "split," and how the captain

had his share in New Jersey real estate in his v
gan would have liked to do the same, only he cou
there was a girl now making his life a torment—
got off onto the sex problem, and what the hec
about it. It must be he was too good-looking, f
let him alone; they got all his money, and he v
thing but an errand-boy for the big insiders of
all the same, it was a great game.

IV

America entered the war. Those great nev
been opposing the entry now suddenly discovere
the German menace; and those guests of the T
read the newspapers changed their minds ov
Tarleton, who had been weeping at the thought
might dye the plain of Flanders with their blo
that he had always despised atheistical German
around the corner, hung the stars and stripes
explained all day long to his customers that a D
Holland, and not from the accursed land of the
became "liberty steak," and sauerkraut becam
and so the world was made safe for democracy.

The mental ordeal was a severe one for Roger
in his life hurt him so much as to admit that
been right. However, there is a limit to the alo
can maintain from his fellow men; unless he
an outright "crank," and let his hair grow to hi
raw carrots, and vote the Socialist ticket. Im
all around him in a fever of excitement, prepa
die for their country, and not be shaken in sou
from his ivory tower, and wrote a poem in dispra

he should claim exemption, on the ground that his
indispensable to literature. Roger would laugh and
board would be more apt to heed the fact that he was

Kip also had struggles of soul. He wanted to do
was ashamed of the trembling which seized him at t
having to leave the Tarleton House, and dump its
cares onto the frail shoulders of his mother. But w
regulations were made known, they called for men be
one and thirty; so Kip settled back with a sigh of
three cronies remained unseparated, and without bein
it, throve upon the sufferings of those who went aw
of people came crowding to New York, to take part
and war prosperity; so the Tarleton House raised it
prices, and even then had a waiting list. Jerry got a
"World," because of his brilliance in describing pat
strations; while Roger, on account of the leaping pri
got his uncles to increase his allowance.

Ill fate contrived it that the publication date of
Starlight," Roger Chilcote's first volume of poems, c
America's entrance into the war. Hopeless to expect t
papers would find space for two such events; the wa
headlines, and the utmost the new poet could hope fo
cès d'estime." The final authority in the poetical
day was a member of the Brahmin caste which resid
Boston, and is reputed to speak only to God. This arb
was compelled, under the laws of Massachusetts, to we
there was no law to prevent her from smoking big
and swearing vigorously. To the shrine of this la
deity all poets and would-be poets made pilgrimage, a
out the sheep from the goats. The publishers sent th
to her, and Roger sent another copy respectfully

V

Roger would receive letters from home, and read these aloud to his cronies, skipping a few intimate passages. Letters from his older brother, brief and formal; "Colonel Ted" he was now, no longer of the Louisiana state militia, but of the United States army, and expecting soon to go overseas. Brief notes from Lee, who had turned the plantations over to his uncles, and entered an officers' training camp. Occasionally a scrawly family note from dear Mrs. Chilcote, a perfect Southern lady, living far above such common considerations as spelling and punctuation. "Little Pinckney has fallen down," wrote the good soul—Pinckney being her oldest grandson—"Little Pinckney has fallen down and torn his pance."

But the longest and most satisfactory letters were from Roger's younger sister. Maggie May had the time to write, and she loved him the most, and took pride in his success. Roger would stop in the middle of one of her letters, and say that all this family stuff would bore them; but Kip would say no, no, they were interested in everything that happened to the Chilcotes. Jerry would add: "We're interested even in the colored folks"! So Roger would read how little Pinckney had ridden his bicycle off the front porch, and Mama had sat paralyzed in her chair, unable to make a sound except, "Jesus! Jesus"! over and over again. And how black Eve's blacker Adam had been drafted for the army, and the chocolate-colored Snowball's ginger-colored Napoleon had got his cheek carved in a honkytonk. There were a swarm of relatives to be reported on, as well as a swarm of family servants, and it took Kip some time to get the white uncles and aunts sorted out from the black, brown, and tan ones.

He had come to feel that he knew the writer of these letters, the sweet-faced girl who looked out at him from a photograph on Roger's dresser. He discovered in Maggie May Chilcote a being akin to himself; one with a talent for hero-worship, and not ashamed to be humble. It was a great relief to him to have the sister admit that she didn't understand what Roger meant by his poetry. Before long some one took a snap-shot of the three cronies, standing on the steps of the Tarleton House, and Roger sent this to his sister, and she wrote back: "Kip is a nice-looking boy." This was read aloud to him while he was sorting the morning mail, with the result that he got everybody's letters into the wrong pigeonholes.

He noted that Maggie May spent her days at the same kind of labor as himself; looking after the physical welfare of a large number of persons, and seeing that servants counted the laundry and had the roast in the oven on time. Also he noted that she suffered from excess of conscientiousness, and worried continually about those she loved. She would write to her wonderful brother, on the high road to fame: "Dear Roger, do be careful and not drink too much. Remember poor dear Papa!"

Kip would have liked to say that same thing. He was in position to watch, and it seemed to him there were times when dear Roger did certainly drink too much. But what could Kip do about it? Roger, the glorious, the inspired, was asking no advice; neither was Jerry, serene and self-confident man of the world. These tall, elegant literary conquerors were beings so far above Kip that he dared not utter the faintest little mouse-squeak of protest; he dared not even look a protest—for fear of the laughter he would excite.

They knew, of course, what was going on in his naive soul while they were imbibing the pink and green and brown and red and golden concoctions which they poured out of bottles, and were so skillful at combining, and so learned and eloquent in discussing. It added to their gaiety to see the "kid" standing there, questioning with his big blue-grey eyes and puzzled frown; they would tease him by describing the wonderful sensations he was missing, the glories and thrills, the visions and dreams which in his superstitious blindness he denied to himself. Poor, repressed, puritanical kid! When they got fairly started on this theme, they would vie with each other in telling wild tales of the drinking bouts they had taken part in, the perils they had undergone and the feats they had performed, under protection of the ministering angels of Bacchus and John Barleycorn. Roger had once driven an automobile up the slope of a rising drawbridge; while Jerry had been chased by half a dozen sailors through the worst dives of New Orleans. When they ran out of things that had really happened, they made up new ones, and chuckled with laughter to see Kip's eyes pop wider.

VI

There was another aspect of liquor-drinking about which they talked a great deal at this time. There were fanatical persons in the country who wanted to put an end to the liquor traffic, and were carrying on agitation to that end. "Prohibitionists" they were

called; or sometimes, by way of camouflage, "temperance advocates." They had managed to have their way in many states, at least so far as the laws were concerned. Now in this war situation they saw an opportunity to make further encroachments upon the freedom of Americans. The whole country was being rationed, as regards the principal food-stuffs; we had to feed not merely our own armies, but the peoples of England and France and Italy, and even occupied Belgium. What a crime that grains needed for the winning of the war should be turned into alcoholic poisons! So clamored the fanatics, and their cries began to be heard; there was serious talk in the papers that the government, under the war-powers granted, might forbid the use of food-stuffs for the making of liquor.

There were plenty of Americans who would rather have their whisky than their food, and these set up a counter-clamor, on behalf of their "personal liberty" and joys of living, even in war-time. One of the most clamorous was the Big Chief Pow; he would come to Roger Chilcote's room, carrying a newspaper with some report about the spread of the prohibition mania, and he would start his picturesque denunciation of the bluenoses and the wowsers, the Methodist old maids riding on camels and the tub-thumpers from the Bible belt sitting on sprinkler-carts. Pow's vocabulary gave glee to Roger, who would uncork a bottle to loosen his tongue. Roger would even pretend to disagree, and say something good about the practice of singing hymns—just to be entertained by the other's tirade.

As for Kip, he would find some pretext to slip out of the room. There was no more pleasure in the party for him when his father came in. The drinking of Roger and Jerry was in its early stages, and had elements of gaiety; but his father was a settled toper, and Kip knew that he came to Roger's room for only one reason, because there was liquor to be had free of charge. The "Big Chief" never thought of anything but liquor now; his whole being was one itch for it, he moved toward it as certain plants turn to the sun. All his wit, his sociability and friendliness, were mere stage-acting; he was like a dog in a circus, which stands on a barrel and does tricks for his dinner.

Roger would amuse himself by tossing scraps to this poor dog-man; and Kip would worry about it, wondering if he ought not interfere. The time came when Pow went off on one of his sprees; and after that, Roger became serious—remembering the image of

his own father, waxen in color, with red gashes in his wrists and throat. He recalled the fact that he was an imaginative poet, having taken all mankind for his province; and he began asking questions about the life of a drunkard's son in New York.

When the Tarleton family had first come to the metropolis, Pow had been selling bonds, and had kept fairly sober on working days; it was only on Sundays that he would go to excess. So Kip had got the idea that if only the saloons could be closed on Sundays, the family might have a chance to live. All through boyhood, his personal devil had been the big, red-faced Dutchman who kept the saloon around the corner, and kept it open on Sundays in spite of the law. Kip had had to go to Sandkuhl's to get his father out, and several times Sandkuhl had put Kip out instead. "But one day he hurt my arm, and I started to cry, and some old gentleman came in and made a row; so after that Sandkuhl was afraid, and any time I came after father, he'd pry him loose and start him on his way."

"You can't use that story," put in Jerry Tyler, the judge of literary material. "That was old stuff in the eighteen-fifties. 'Ten Nights in a Bar-room!' 'Father, oh, father, come home with me now!'"

"Don't fool yourself," retorted Kip. "It's live stuff at this very hour. This town is full of kids that know all about it—either you get father home or you don't eat next day."

He went on to tell how for years his one idea had been, if only Sandkuhl could be put out of business. But little by little he had discovered the liquor industry; the wholesalers, and back of them the distillers and the brewers, with the political machine they subsidized and maintained.

"Now you want to put the whole thing out of business?" inquired Jerry, sarcastically. His long form was stretched out on the bed, with his feet over the footboard, and his hands under his head; he looked at Kip with pitying tolerance.

"Well, I understand there are some states that do it." When it came to an abstract discussion, Kip thought it was all right for him to put forward his feeble ideas.

"He's nothing but a bluenose himself!" exclaimed the reporter. "Mark my words, he'll end up as a damned wowser!"

But Roger was patient with the youngster's naiveté. "You can have such a law in a state like Kansas, Kip, but not in New York, with its big foreign element. Who would enforce the law?"

"Couldn't the national government do it?"

"The national government can't even pass such a law!" broke in Jerry, irritably. "The Constitution doesn't give that power to Congress."

"Mightn't it be possible to amend the Constitution?"

"Forget it, kid—you're talking nonsense! You'll never see anything like that—not if you live to be a hundred!" Thus Jeremiah Breckenridge Tyler, graduate of Tulane University, and space-writer on a great metropolitan newspaper. When, six months later, such a constitutional amendment was actually passed, and a year thereafter ratified by forty-six states, Jeremiah Breckenridge Tyler took advantage of a merciful provision of our mother Nature, which enables us to forget things which we don't enjoy remembering.

VII

The American people were absorbed in their colossal task of organizing the greatest army in history, and putting it onto the battle-line overseas. They had no time to think about a poet, and any such creature must do one of two things: either plunge into the excitement, and take to composing mottoes for posters, and verses inciting housewives to save food; or else withdraw himself, and live in his own imagination. Roger Chilcote was drifting towards the latter course. The war had to be won, no doubt, but the process was a bore, and he was tired of liberty bond salesmen and four minute oratory in the theatres. The truth was, Roger couldn't forgive the war for having spoiled the success of his book; he would say this with a laugh—but it was the truth, even so.

His attitude was intensified by the arrival in New York of "Colonel Ted," full of urgent practical affairs, efficient and exasperating as ever. He was going to France ahead of the army, to apply his special knowledge to the building of cantonments: something of that sort, about which he would do no more than drop portentous hints. He had only two days in New York, and many important interviews, so he had no time to visit his brother's abode, and meet a mere newspaper reporter or a hotel clerk. Roger came back from a visit and applied his verbal gifts to a description of Ted's Sam Browne belt and leather "shin-guards"—so he disrespectfully called them; he puffed out his chest and "sucked in his guts"—the shocking military phrase—and said "Hem!" and "Haw!" in the accents of all the world conquerors since Alexander. Ted

had inquired when he was going to join up, and was ill satisfied with poetry as a basis of exemption. He had never even heard the name of Amy Lowell—and when Roger mentioned her, he wanted to know, since when had his brother acquired such respect for an old maid of New England. Roger assured the world-conqueror that this was a new kind of old maid, who smoked cigars and told rakish stories; but somehow that failed to improve her status with the young militarist.

No, Roger was "off" the war business, and ashamed of the rhymes he had written against the Hun—which, oddly enough, had struck the popular mood, and carried the name of the new poet to England! He wanted to get away from noise and confusion, the hectic life of literary teas and studio parties. His muse was calling him; offering fragments of what promised to be a shining narrative in the new "polyrhythmic" verse. Roger wouldn't tell about it, except in vague general phrases; it wasn't "incubated" yet, he declared; he wanted to retire and brood over it. He pointed out that a story stood a better chance to be read than isolated poems, however splendid; and Kip seconded this, because he hoped that if there was a story in the thing, he might stand a better chance of finding out what it was all about.

There was a cousin of the Chilcotes living somewhere out on Long Island: a niece of Grandfather Chilcote, married to the head of a New York bank. Soon after Roger's arrival, there had rolled up to the Tarleton House a sumptuous motor-car described as "custom-built," with shining silver and a chauffeur in livery, and Roger had been whisked away to spend a week-end among the plutocrats. The estate, called "Broadhaven," was one of those gaudy places where they give you a genuine Van Dyck in your bed-chamber, and you dine off a table carved with the heads of saints, plundered from a fifteenth century French abbey—thus Roger, telling about it in the tone of derision proper to an amateur bohemian. These fashionable folk were now begging the new poet to honor their domain with his presence for the summer. "Cousin Jenny" had heard of Amy Lowell, even if "Colonel Ted" had not; she promised Roger that he would be left absolutely free, and might have a cottage to himself, with or without a servant to wait upon him.

Roger went for a week or two to try it, and came back and reported that freedom was unavailable among the rich. He had damaged his cousin's social position, by refusing to let the Countess

of Cheshirecat have a look at him, when that great lady had come calling. Roger had a plan of his own—to ramble up the coast of Maine, and find himself an island with two shacks on it, one for himself and one for a man to cook flapjacks and coffee. Roger was drinking too much—so he said, without any hint from the puritanical Kip; he wanted to get to some place where people didn't put the stuff under your nose every half hour. He would keep his things at the Tarleton House, paying for his room just the same; such being the magnificent way of the rich when their personal convenience is concerned. Kip and Jerry might use it for a sitting-room, and Jerry might finish the stock of whisky—but be sure to keep the cabinet locked from such foragers as Taylor Tibbs.

VIII

Roger went away, and the light went out from the family hotel. Jerry and Kip were back on the old basis, having to depend upon occasional letters. The poet had found his island, and it was all that he had dreamed: rocky shores, pine-trees singing in the wind, cool blue waters dotted with sail-boats, and now and then a storm, with a gorgeous roaring and thunder. Roger had found an expert maker of flapjacks, and he fished, and caught lobsters—fancy real live and kicking lobsters right out of the depths! And morning swims in cold water—Kip and Jerry read about them on August days when Manhattan was a place of wilted collars and palm-leaf fans. But there were no Maine vacations for hotel-clerks or newspaper reporters in war-time.

Kip missed the news from Pointe Chilcote; and Jerry, who thought it fun to pretend that Kip was developing a long-distance "crush" on Maggie May, passed on this complaint to Roger, who passed it to his sister. So then Maggie May wrote a letter to Jerry. She thanked him and Mr. Tarleton for having helped to keep Roger out of the war; she thought that two of her brothers were enough to give, and agreed that Roger's genius set him apart. She was thrilled by the reviews of his book, and was glad to hear that the new work would have a story, thus holding out a hope to stupid persons. Again Kip realized an affinity to the sister at home.

Pow Tarleton would drop in on the sittings in Roger's room, and do his best to make himself agreeable. His dark eyes would roam to the cabinet in which Roger had left his liquors, and to which he knew Jerry had the key. But Jerry hardened his heart

and took no hints. He had no idea of drinking up Roger's stuff, nor was he going to waste his own upon Pow. He had come to know the old man's jokes by heart, and to be bored with his boasting. To heaven with all Southern gentlemen! But Pow never gave up; that handsome mahogany cabinet, which Roger had purchased especially for the keeping of his potables, drew the eyes and thoughts of the Big Chief as if it had contained scalps of his enemies. He would sit and talk about the heat, and his thirst, and the high price of liquor; until Jerry would say that he was going to bed, and must lock up.

The nominal head of the Tarleton House had an inexhaustible theme of conversation these days: the spread of the prohibition mania, and the menace it offered to the joyfulness of the nation. Pow would read of events which fell like thunderbolts, both to him and to the great metropolitan newspapers from which he got his knowledge about the world. These papers had such contempt for the prohibition mania, they seldom condescended to mention it; they thought they were disposing of the subject when they printed a cartoon representing a lean grotesque preacher in a long-tailed black coat and a battered stove-pipe hat, carrying a huge umbrella under his arm and riding a camel or a water-wagon. So the people of New York were ignorant of the fact that thousands of big employers of the country had made up their minds that drunken workers could not handle high-speed machinery.

The people of New York prided themselves upon the sharpness of their wits, and referred to the rest of America as "the sticks" or the "Bible belt," "Hicktown" or "Boobville." But these smart city people knew a lot that wasn't so, and a lot more that was not especially worth knowing. Competitive greed had sharpened their wits to a razor edge, and taught them how to "make" money; but when they had "made" it, they found themselves unable to purchase real happiness, health, or dignity.

These people of "N'Yawk" knew practically nothing about the great educational campaign which the prohibitionists were carrying on all over the United States. A weekly paper was being sent to a million homes in states where prohibition was before the legislatures; endorsements were being got from city councils, boards of trade, chambers of commerce; thousands of speakers were addressing labor unions and fraternal orders, churches and women's clubs and patriotic societies. News of such addresses littered the floors in the offices of "Woil" and "Join'l" and "Hurl"; and so the read-

ers of these papers were astounded when they learned that the twenty-fifth state of the union had forbidden the manufacture and sale of alcoholic liquor.

What the fanatics were clamoring for was "war prohibition": the saving of those fifty million bushels of wheat and rye and barley that were being made into hard liquor—to say nothing of the time of the men who did the work, and the space in freight-cars wasted. They insisted that the President had power to issue such a decree. But Woodrow Wilson was a Virginia gentleman of the old school, not the sort to heed wowsers and bluenoses. The trouble-makers concentrated upon Congress, setting to work to frighten the wits out of representatives and senators.

Thus came a distressful day in the history of Pow's life, when Congress passed a "food control act," forbidding the manufacture and importation of distilled liquor for beverage purposes. If Pow had heard the blowing of Gabriel's trumpet he could not have been more dismayed. What on earth was going to become of Southern hospitality? To be sure, there was in the bonded warehouses a supply of liquor estimated to last two or three years; but the price would start leaping, and poor Pow had no cash to invest in liquor stocks—and anyhow, he was constitutionally incapable of keeping liquor except in his insides.

IX

The cold winds of autumn began to blow through the chinks in Roger's cabin; they blew him all the way to New York, and he showed up one October morning, with rosy cheeks, sun-tanned and with golden hair wind-blown; he was lean, and full of the devil. He routed Jerry out of bed with whoops and pounding on the door, and got him down to his sitting-room, and slapped him on the back, and Kip also, calling them names of abuse, and announcing that he was a reformed rake, and was going to start life all over. To celebrate the event, he and Jerry would have a drink of perfectly gorgeous Canadian whisky which he had purchased in the prohibition state of Maine.

The "makings" were produced, and were "made," and Jerry sipped the liquor and said it wasn't bad, but he would prefer Scotch every time. Whereupon Roger declared that Scotch whisky was an abomination to the palate and an extermination to the gizzard, having originated in a land of mists and fogs, infested with theo-

logical vermin, so that a man wanted to drink and forget as quickly as possible. In America the sun shone, and there was a new generation with sunshine in its heart, and our native drinks were nature's gift to us. But, of course, if Jerry still clung to his superstitions, there was a part bottle of Scotch in the cabinet—unless he had finished it up in the interim.

Jerry said no, he had never opened the cabinet. He gave his friend the key, and Roger stooped and unlocked the mahogany door, and from the forest of bottles took out one labeled "Glenlivet Malt." Jerry took it, and poured a few drops into his empty glass—and then suddenly stopped, and held it up to the light, and frowned at it with his heavy, dark eyebrows. "Why, what's this?" The liquid was clear and transparent, not the rich brown that was expected. Roger put the glass under his nose and gave a sniff or two. Then he put it to his lips, and cautiously tasted it. "That's funny," said he. "Do you put water into your bottles when they're empty?"

Such a question hardly needed answering. Roger took another bottle out of the cabinet. It was supposed to be full of brandy, but the seal had been broken, and there was a telltale hole in the cork. When the cork was drawn, and some of the contents poured into a glass, it was discovered to be of the same color, transparent and tasteless. Three or four more bottles yielded the same results. Somebody had opened the cabinet, and taken every drop of the liquor, replacing it with aqua pura from the Croton dam.

"As God is my witness," said Jerry, "I have never touched this cabinet."

"What did you do with the key?" asked Roger.

"It's been on my ring all the time."

Roger knelt down and did a little sleuthing. There were specks that looker like wax on the inside of the key-hole plate, and he said: "Some one has taken an impression of the lock and had a key made."

Kip had been standing by, observing the drinking scene, silent and uncomfortable as always. Now Roger looked at him, and saw that tears were running down his cheeks. He sprang and caught him by the arm. "Never mind, kid!" he exclaimed. "Nobody blames you. I really don't mind anyhow. It's a good one on me." He and Jerry began to laugh—though somewhat feebly.

"It makes me want to die!" exclaimed Kip. He could not control the tears—they kept coming, and he did not try to wipe them away.

"But kid, you can't help it! It's no more your fault than mine!" Both Roger and Jerry saw that it was really necessary to laugh, and they managed to find it genuinely funny when they got started.

"I'll kill that black Taylor," exclaimed Jerry.

But Kip would have no such pretense. "It wasn't Taylor," he said, simply. "It was my father."

Roger grinned, as if this would be the best joke of all. "You really think that? By golly, if it was, he's got the laugh on us, all right. Imagine him chuckling up his sleeve!"

"He sure put one over on us!" chimed in Jerry. "The old rascal!"

"You see what's happened," persisted Kip, paying no attention to their pretenses. "The price of booze has gone out of his reach, and so——" he stopped, choked by his shame.

Roger took him by the arm. "Don't be a cry-baby, kid," he said. "You're making a mountain out of a molehill. When a man can't get a drink, well, what can he do but *get* one?"

"He might have blown out the gas in his room," answered Kip; "anything but turn into a thief!"

Roger's grip on his arm became tighter. "Don't use such talk, Kip! One doesn't put such things into words. And anyhow, I tell you, you're using the wrong words. So shut up and let's forget it forever!"

"I'll replace it, of course," said Kip, trying to get control of himself. "And thank you—I hope you know I appreciate your kindness in trying to turn it into a joke. I'll get you some more, right away."

This time Roger's laughter was unforced. "Good Lord, boy! If I have to drink what you buy, I'm on the wagon for life!"

But Kip took a chance as to that. He carried the story to his mother, and she gave him the money—he having none of his own. He went to the dealer from whom Roger purchased his liquor, and explained that some of it had been stolen, and that he felt responsible. The man looked up Roger's old accounts, and they got a pretty good idea of what had been in the cabinet. The prices made Kip's head swim—but no matter, the loss must be made up.

The stuff was delivered, and Roger thought it best to make no fuss about it; but he set out at once to get "square" on Kip and his mother. He bribed Kip's aunt with a fancy Chinese shawl, and got from her Mrs. Tarleton's measurements; then, the evening before the Thanksgiving celebration in the family hotel, he sneaked

to his landlady's room, and opened the door a crack, and dropped inside a large box, and shut the door quickly and fled downstairs. The box, upon being opened, was found to contain an unimaginably expensive purple silk dress, in the new fashion which caused a middle-aged lady from Virginia to blush even to look at it.

But what could she do about it? The name of the dealer had been cut out of the box, and all the labels cut from the dress, so it couldn't be returned; and when she accused the poet of the crime, he looked astonished, and denied it so solemnly that she half believed him. So there was nothing for Mrs. Tarleton to do but to add a lace fichu in the interest of modesty, and wear that costume to the evening celebration. Thus the chivalry of the Old South, which Jerry had so vehemently repudiated! When the poet danced an old-fashioned lancers with Mrs. Tarleton, and jovially invited the Big Chief to call the figures, it was almost a family reconciliation.

X

In that autumn of 1917, a black storm-cloud arose in the American sky, the revolution of the dreaded Russian Bolsheviks. It became clear that these revolutionists were going to make peace with Germany, and release a million of the Kaiser's troops to be thrown onto the Western front. The war, into which America had blundered more or less blindly, took on all at once a desperate aspect. And this, of course, brought a new crisis in the problem of liquor. The prohibition fanatics were not content with having banned whisky, but wanted to put through their whole program. While all the food in the country was being rationed, should we go on wasting grain in brewing beer? So they clamored.

There had been a long-standing difference among temperance advocates over the problem of "hard liquor" versus wines and beer. The latter contained less alcohol, and therefore were less harmful, and many temperance people had pleaded with the brewers to cut loose from the distillers. The real evil was the saloon, these workers argued; if we could have in this country something like the European cafe, where men sipped a glass of beer, and read the papers and chatted and listened to music, conditions might be better, and the efforts of the fanatics less successful.

But all such overtures had been futile. The tempo of American life required quick drinking, and the tempo of business required

quick selling. The saloon-keeper didn't want a customer who took an hour to sip a glass of beer; he wanted one who got drunk in half that time. The policy was to "crowd the market," and then use a share of the profits for "protection"—the buying not merely of the police and the city governments, but of both political parties. By that means the distillers and brewers had piled up an investment of a thousand million dollars; they had ruled the cities for a hundred years, and expected to rule for another hundred.

But now, in the midst of war, when distilling was seen to be doomed, the brewers were seized by a panic, and threw their partners overboard. The newspapers suddenly blossomed with full page advertisements of brewers explaining that they had come to see the evil of their ways, and regretted the "false mental association" which had caused people to class their product with "hard liquor." They besought the public to take an interest in "true temperance," and pictured the calamities which would follow total prohibition. What would the stock-growers do if deprived of "brewer's grain?"

There was a desperate struggle in the halls of Congress. The brewing interests had the money, but the fanatics had the votes. They forced through Congress an act forbidding the use of foodstuffs in the making of wine and beer; and having got that, they began clamoring for an amendment to the Constitution, forbidding all traffic in intoxicants forever. The liquor interests, seeing ruin before them, had one of their senators, a gentleman from Ohio named Warren G. Harding, prepare a little joker. In order to become valid, a constitutional amendment has to be ratified by three-fourths of the states; and the joker declared the prohibition amendment should be void unless these thirty-six states ratified it within six years—something the "wets" counted upon preventing. Later on the time was extended to seven years, and in this form the measure passed the Senate and House at Christmas time of 1917. It was called the "Eighteenth Amendment," and all the wowsers in the United States now concentrated upon the task of persuading or frightening the state legislatures into ratifying it.

XI

This dawning of prohibition was the thing Kip Tarleton had been praying for through most of his life, and which people had been telling him he would never, never see. It would amount to getting his father back again; and what Christmas present could

equal that? Kip might be ever so cold to the Big Chief, but even so, he had not forgotten the playmate of his early days. In the depths of his heart, he agreed with his mother, in holding John Barleycorn to blame for all his father's weaknesses; bragging and insincerity, laziness and cheating, you could see these vices come to life in the old man, literally minute by minute, as he poured in the liquor.

There were other reasons, too, for Kip and his mother to rejoice at that Christmas present. What a different affair would be the keeping of a family hotel under prohibition! No longer would Taylor Tibbs spend his time trotting round to Sandkuhl's for pails of "suds" and bottles of whisky and brandy, and to the Elite drug store for doses of bromo-seltzer and Seidlitz powders and Hunyadi water. No longer would the expressman be delivering cases of beer from Hoboken and of rye from Kentucky. No longer would there be rugs to be sent to the cleaners, and bedspreads to the laundry, after some gentleman had vomited over them. No longer would the Tarleton ladies have to wrestle with the moral problem of what to do about the board-bill of Mrs. Faulkner, who was up in her room weeping, because her husband had taken everything and gone on a spree.

Also, Kip figured that he would now be able to have some friends. No longer would he have to be superior to everybody else! No longer would he have to sit like a dummy and spoil all the fun. No longer would he watch Roger and Jerry drifting to the same destiny as Pow, with the accursed business of "treating." Kip's satisfaction at the prospect was so great that he could not conceal it. Jerry, lamenting the progress of the wowsers, would suddenly glance at the youngster and exclaim: "He's grinning at us, the little moral demon!" He would grab Kip and throw him onto the bed, put a pillow on his brown-thatched head and sit on it, and jounce up and down a few times, while Kip howled with mock anguish, and promised never to grin again. But he wouldn't keep the promise. He would open Jerry's door in the morning, while the young man of the world was helpless, shaving his chin, and yell: "Another state has ratified the amendment! It is a landslide!"

The most hilarious aspect of the matter, from Kip's point of view, was that the first states to "come across" were precisely those which meant most to the inmates of the Tarleton House. Barely two weeks after the passage of the amendment through Congress, the state of Mississippi ratified it by vote of its legislature—121

to 8. Three days later came a veritable slap in the face to the Big Chief Powhatan—his own native commonwealth, the mother of cavaliers and statesmen, home of the F. F. V's, proceeding to outlaw liquor by the vote of 114 cowards, with only 21 cavaliers and statesmen daring to say nay! And three days later Kentucky, the bluegrass state, famous for race-horses and Bourbon whisky; native land of Braxton Bragg Gwathmey, retired tobacco-planter, who had the third-floor front in number 39, and was accustomed to have his liquor sent from home, several cases at a time, and stowed under his bed; and three days after that South Carolina, first state to secede and last to be reconstructed; homeland of Beauregard Fortesque, occupant of the second-floor back in number 37, who gave poker-parties that lasted from Saturday night until Monday morning, and knew how to mix every kind of concoction from "horse's necks" and "Mamie Taylors" to "golden slippers" and "blue blazers!"

So it went, state after state, like a row of wooden soldiers, each knocking the next one down. Louisiana, the home of Roger and Jerry, managed to hold out until the following summer, but finally gave way—by the votes of "hill-billies," lashed to frenzy by religious exhorters and evangelists; also by the votes of planters who hoped to keep liquor away from their Negroes. Such, at any rate, was the explanation of the phenomenon which Roger got from his Uncle Daubney. There were in America, it appeared, a great many gentlemen who wanted to have liquor themselves, but didn't want their workers to have it; with the help of such gentlemen, the wowsers and bluenoses might actually come to prevail!

CHAPTER SIX - - *THE GOLDEN JAIL*

I

NEW YORK CITY had become a funnel through which a hundred thousand soldiers were poured overseas every week. They departed silently, with no one at the piers to cheer them; they traveled in flotillas, with warships before and behind, and a mosquito-fleet of destroyers weaving in and out among them. They travelled in silence, at night without so much as the light of a cigarette. Presently they were landed in France, and those at home would get postcards and letters marked "A.E.F.," and nothing more.

The French and British were holding the last German assault; holding, hour by hour, waiting for the American army to go into action. In June began the advance, and the newspapers blazed on their front pages the magical names of Cantigny and Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood; on inside pages, not so proudly, the lists of casualties, beginning as paragraphs, and swelling quickly to columns. Among the earliest was the name of Colonel Edward Pinckney Chilcote, of the 948th Infantry, Louisiana.

One line in the official listings—that was all. In due course his wife would receive a letter of sympathy from his commanding officer, telling that he had died by shell-fire while holding an advanced line against an enemy counter-attack. From the war department would come a sealed package containing his watch, his ring, his cigarette-lighter, several letters from home, and a locket with a picture of his wife and babies. There was a wooden cross marking his grave, and after the war his remains would be dug out of the ground, and sealed in an airtight coffin, and brought back to be interred with military honors in the family burial-ground. Such was the story of "Colonel Ted."

Roger gave few outward signs of grief; but the gaiety went out of him, and those who knew him saw that he was brooding all the time: remembering every harsh and jeering word he had spoken to his brother, the jealousy and strife that had been all through their lives. Ted had believed in discipline, and had given his life for

his faith. What did Roger believe in, and what was he doing to prove it?

The son of the Muses wanted to get away to his island, and go to work again. Here he had wasted a second winter in New York, with tea-parties and literary chatter—"gabble, gobble, guzzle, git!" Again he had been drinking more than was good for him; the so-called "war prohibition" had apparently not made the slightest difference in social customs. People drank more than ever, and said it was because of the nervous tension of war-time. Others drank as a matter of social prestige; when the price of something went up, to have that thing became essential. Yet others drank to spite the wowsers—or so they said. To Kip that sounded like Pow's insisting that he had been driven to drink by his wife's nagging.

Roger wanted to finish his poem. Or did he really want to finish it? He was sick of the damned thing, he would say—it was a piece of junk. Then would begin an argument with Jerry Tyler, who had studied the uncompleted manuscript down to the smallest fragments, and hailed it as one of our future masterpieces; something poignant, beautiful, worthy to be compared with "The Ring and the Book." Kip, too, would be called upon; he had never read Browning, and was no judge of poetry, new or old, but he could testify that the poem had made real to him an historical period—colonial days in Maryland—about which he had been utterly ignorant; and that he was fairly "dying" to know what was going to happen to Anita Vanning and the young travelling surveyor with whom she had fallen so desperately in love.

To be sure, Kip really did know; he had hear Roger and Jerry discussing the story. He knew that the eloping young couple would be overtaken by the grim husband of Anita; that the young lover would be compelled to fight a duel, and would kill the husband; after which it would be impossible for Anita to marry him, and she would pine away. In fact, the reader was told this in the very beginning, for the poem started with a tombstone in a mouldy old church-yard, where the poet brooded over the pitifulness of human fate. On the stone was a bas-relief of Anita, and another of her husband, planter and official of the colony of Maryland shortly before the Revolutionary war.

When you heard the story thus, in bare outline, it sounded like a grand opera libretto, or even a dime novel. But in reality the poem was extraordinarily passionate and moving; the poet had put

life into those characters of a hard-drinking and hard-living day. He had made his hero of Revolutionary days an incarnation of the modern revolt against the system of purchase-marriage. He had written the scenes of young love with a fervor which Jerry compared to "Romeo and Juliet." So now, when Roger grumbled that he was sick of the thing, and it was only a pot-boiler, Jerry would grab him by the shoulders and shake him. Was he going to be one of those futile poetasters who couldn't keep their inspiration long enough to complete a sustained work? One of those wretched creatures you saw in Greenwich Village, sitting round cafe tables, drinking vin ordinaire, and outlining masterpieces they were going to begin next week!

"You have too goddam easy a time, that's what's the matter with you!" stormed Jerry. "If you had to earn your living like me, you'd have finished that poem long ago!"

"No," said Roger, "that's not it. It's that I'm off Anita. She keeps worrying me; she wants too much. A poet can't stand a woman who's exacting."

"Forget Anita!" said Jerry. "She was nothing but a springboard to start you off."

"But she refuses to be forgotten. She's in a fever. She won't let me go away!"

"Tell her you're making her immortal, and let that satisfy her."

"What woman was ever satisfied that way?" growled the poet.

Kip listened to such conversations, and did not reveal by a glance that he felt any curiosity. For a long time he had known that Roger was involved with what Jerry crudely called a "skirt," and that his poem, which was some day to set the literary world on fire, was an idealization of this adventure. The poet had not seen fit to take Kip into his confidence—this being a tribute to Kip's youthful purity of soul.

But Jerry was not so considerate. Immediately after Roger's departure for his second summer in Maine, Jerry availed himself of Kip's services as "shock-absorber." Roger's parting with "Anita" had been painful, and Jerry, seeing Roger off at the station, had the story poured out to him. Then he came back to the Tarleton House, and sitting in Roger's comfortable room, with his feet on Roger's footstool, and in his hand a glass of whisky and soda, he first swore Kip to secrecy, and then told him the fantastic tale of an intrigue which had been going on for a year and a half, ever since the first month of Roger's coming to New York.

II

Walking one afternoon on a side street in the shopping district, the poet had been overtaken by a tremendous downpour of rain. In front of him were two ladies, running to shelter, and after the fashion of a Southern gentleman, he had pressed his umbrella upon them, and hailed a passing taxi-cab and put them into it. In the minute or two of excitement Roger had liked what he saw of the younger woman, a brunette beauty of twenty-two or thereabouts; yielding to a double impulse, to see more of her, and to get out of the rain, he had stepped into the cab.

They had given an address in the east sixties, a fashionable and expensive neighborhood. During the half hour of the ride Roger had poured out the treasures of his charm, both social and literary, and noted the curious reactions of his fellow-passengers. The younger woman sat with long dark lashes drooping over her black eyes, scarcely ever lifting her glance to the golden-haired god before her. But blushes came and went upon her cheeks, and there were signs of interest a-plenty. The other woman, "the duenna," as Roger named her in his mind, was stiff and solid, clad in black, with no fashion and no nonsense about her; she stared half the time at Roger, and the other half at her companion, and the alert hostility in her look was comical. "This young woman is in jail!" thought the poet.

When the cab came to the home, the impression was reinforced. It was one of those big double houses with an entrance at the street level; and not merely were there heavy bars over the ground-floor windows, but over those of the second story as well. The bars were of a reddish bronze, and the street door had double gates of such bronze before it. "A golden jail!" thought the poet to himself.

He had hoped that, if he laid out his charms freely enough, he might be invited inside until the rain was over. But no, the duenna insisted upon paying the cab-fare, and thanked him with no superfluous word, and tried to keep him from getting out and carrying the umbrella over them to the house. A solemn old butler with grey hair opened for them, and they went inside without another word, and the door was shut in Roger's face.

He had the taxi drive him to a drugstore at the corner, where he sat waiting for the rain to stop, meanwhile ordering a soft drink and chatting with the druggist. He found out who lived in this house, a "Wall Street man," head of an old-established firm. "I

think I've met him," said Roger, fishing for further information. "Elderly man, isn't he?"

The druggist thought that he wore a little grey mustache; having seen him sitting in his car, while the chauffeur made purchases.

"He has a daughter, hasn't he?"

The druggist didn't know about the family, but had seen a young lady—yes, a dark young lady, very good looking.

A day or two later Jerry Tyler did a bit of scouting for his friend, calling upon this Wall Street man in his capacity as newspaper interviewer. Jerry reported him one of those persons who keep themselves in jail all their lives; rotten rich, self-centered, hard as nails, cautious, afraid of blackmailers—and with good reason, because you could see he had gone the pace.

It was ten years before Kip ever heard the man's real name; Jerry always spoke of him as "Mr. Blank." Also the name "Anita" was not the real one, but that which Roger was using in his poem. Jerry, waiting outside the man's private office, had said to the stenographer: "Unless I'm mistaken, I once interviewed Mrs. Blank about a social function. Rather young lady, very beautiful, dark, isn't she?" "Yes," said the stenographer, but no more. The office was a jail, too, reported Jerry.

Roger's poetical mind was aflame with the idea that he had to do with a beautiful Pompilia, held prisoner by a wicked old Franceschini. He wrote a sonnet in praise of a lady; a quite wonderful sonnet of the old Italian sort, full of glowing imagery and extravagant verve. He gave this sonnet a title which was destined to play a part in his future life: "The Golden Jail." He didn't explain what he meant by that title, but left it to be guessed. He copied the sonnet out on a piece of elegant parchment, and mailed it; and when, two or three days later, it came back without a word of comment, he decided that the prisoner did not even get her mail. Such a poem was a passport to the presence of a queen.

The Cavalier-poet haunted the street in front of the house, but no face appeared at the window, no handkerchief was waved. In the end he followed one of the women servants home; a sewing-woman, living in a lodging house. She was easy prey for a handsome young aristocrat, skilled in the social graces. She opened up and told him the pitiful story of "Anita," who had been married for four years to a selfish old man who kept her for his plaything; exactly like a Turkish wife in a harem, as portrayed in a recent movie. The only man allowed in the house was the elderly butler who had been with the master from youth. No other came, except

now and then a friend of the master's, accompanied by him. When Mrs. Blank went out, it was with that old she watch-dog, Miss Emily, a cousin of the master's, an old maid from New England. The mistress of that strange household might have all the luxuries that money could buy, but she had no happiness. When it was a question of any other man, the master behaved like a maniac; his own life having been such that he would not trust man or woman.

It took no more than a ten-dollar bill to induce the sempstress to deliver the manuscript poem to the prisoner of the "Golden Jail;" and in a few days there came in the poet's mail a letter about his work. Let anyone criticise a poem of his, said Roger, and he would know that person; he could not be deceived by any pretense, nor blinded by any flattery. So now he proceeded to fall in love with this unattainable beauty—only he set out to attain her with a speed that would have done credit to a "mob" of high-class cracksmen.

III

Kip recollected the next stage of this adventure—which everybody in the Tarleton House had known about. A wagon from a sporting-goods establishment had delivered at the hotel a large object known as a "surf-board." It was nine feet long, and a couple of feet wide, rounded at the corners, and beautifully oiled and polished. Roger had explained that he was expecting to visit the South Seas, and meantime wanted to practice at the beaches. Why he had bought such an object in December was left to speculation. It was stood up in a corner of the room, and charged to the eccentricities of the poetical temperament. Now Jerry explained to Kip what its purpose had been.

Next to the "Golden Jail" stood a fashionable apartment-house, with a space of five or six feet between the two. Roger had made note that the sixth floor of the apartment-house was level with the roof of the "Golden Jail," and that there were windows looking out upon it. He went in by the "delivery entrance" of the apartment-house, and had a session with the youth who held the post of janitor's helper. After a study of this naive Swedish face, Roger drew out a new twenty-dollar bill with a bright yellow back, and laid it in the other's hand. Thus persuaded, the young Swede took Roger up to the sixth floor in the freight-elevator, and let him look around. He found that on the roof of the "Golden Jail" there was

a small structure containing a stairway, and a door leading inside. He found also that one of the windows of the apartment-house was in a corridor, a sort of enclosed fire-escape, not often used. Said he to the janitor's assistant:

"There's a maid in the house next door whom I want to meet on the roof. I have a way by which I can cross from this window. If you'll let me come here tomorrow night and forget me, nobody will ever know it. I can close the window, all but a little, and open it again when I get ready to come back. I'll pay you fifty dollars more, and if you'll keep your mouth shut, and let me come whenever I want to, I'll pay you a hundred every month. I'm crazy about that girl."

Of course there was a chance that this might be a "gentleman burglar," such as janitor's helpers learned about in the movies of those naive days. But Roger managed to convince this particular helper that he was youth and laughter, not crime. The Swede was something of a Romeo himself, it appeared. A bargain was struck, and Roger paid the sewing-woman another ten-dollar bill to take a letter to the lady of the "Golden Jail," telling her simply that a poet had noticed upon the roof of a lady's castle a door, and that at the stroke of midnight the poet would be standing outside that door.

So, on the evening appointed, Roger carried his surf-board from his room in the Tarleton house, and called a taxicab and rode off, holding the thing outside on the running-board of the cab. The janitor's helper was not merely a Romeo, but an engineer and builder of bridges; he had measured the distance from the window-sill to the coping of the roof, and he now put some stout nails into the surf-board, in such position as to keep it from slipping at either end. He took the other Romeo up in the freight-elevator to the sixth floor, and raised the window for him, and held the board while he crawled across on hands and knees. Roger took the board over to his side, and stowed it safely, and tiptoed over to the door and took up his cold vigil.

He had a wrist-watch with a radium face, and promptly at twelve he heard a sound at the door; it opened, and he slipped inside. Not a word was spoken; a woman's hand touched his, and fingers touched his lips. He felt himself gently led down a steep flight of steps, and then along a corridor, all in utter darkness. He judged that he was taken into a room, for there was a pause, and he heard the faint sound of a key. Then the woman's hands

touched his overcoat; he started to whisper, but heard a quick "Ssh!" and fingers pressed his lips.

IV

At this point in his narrative Jerry paused for a laugh. He had always laughed with Roger here. Suppose it had been the sewing-woman, or one of the maids! "Oh, Lord! Just suppose!"

But there was no fun in Kip just then. A whole complex of emotions possessed him. So it was really true that the story in the poem was Roger's own! And Roger had been risking his life for his heroine! "How he must have loved her!" he exclaimed, naively.

Jerry shrugged. "I guess he thought it was love," he said. "Personally, I like to see a little more of the women I love. Roger hardly even heard this woman's voice—just a sort of ghost-whisper, that you couldn't hear three feet away. 'He will kill you,' she would say, in that dark and silent room. 'He will hire a man to shoot you at night on the street.' Roger judged the room was a studio, because there was always a smell of paint in it. He never had a chance to explore it; he was led into it with Anita holding him by the hand, taking every footstep with slow care. If a mouse moved, it might mean discovery. Oh, yes, that was an adventure to start a poet's fancy!" Jerry paused a moment, and added: "I think that is why he did it!"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Kip, the romantic one.

"He had many motives, of course. It was the madness of genius. A beautiful lady shut up by an ogre in a castle, and being rescued by a gallant knight. I'm too cynical to see romance, I guess; I see the gallant knight crawling on his belly, on an icy surf-board seventy-five feet in the air! I'm not thrilled by real stories; I'm thrilled by the poem Roger is making of it, and so will the high-brow critics be, when they read it—and hear rumors of the real story! What a literary item!"

But Kip didn't get that point. He was thinking about Roger, not about his book. "It makes my blood run cold to think of it."

"All that winter the crazy loon slid on his belly across that perilous gulf—in rain or shine. There was one early morning when, in order to get back, he had to dig his surf-board out from under several inches of snow, and rub away at it until it was no longer

too slippery. Damn a selfish woman, that would let a man risk his life like that!"

"Yes," said Kip, gravely. "If she really loved him, she ought to have left her husband, and gone away with Roger somewhere. Didn't he ask her to?"

"He was in that state of poetic intoxication which asks nothing but to go on being intoxicated. I suppose he'd have been crawling on his belly till yet, but for what happened."

"What?" demanded Kip, eagerly.

"One rainy April morning, just after the publication of 'Swords of Starlight,' our Romeo, after parting from his Juliet, put his board across the chasm and discovered that some one had shut the window of the apartment house and made it fast. There he was, stuck on the roof of the 'Golden Jail!' There was nothing for it but to shiver and wait for daylight." Jerry stopped and laughed. "It's always been my theory that that was the beginning of the end of the enchantment! No romance when you're frozen! He had to leave his surf-board, and get himself over to the roof of the house on the other side, which happened to be on a level with the jail, and then on to the next, until he had got three doors farther away. Then he pounded on the trap-door on the roof, until it was lifted, and there appeared the face of an astonished manservant, standing on a step-ladder. It wasn't easy, even for Roger, to handle that predicament—first with the manservant, then with the butler, then with the master of the house, who fortunately happened to be very deaf, and was finally persuaded to accept what the butler shouted into his ear—that Roger was a somnambulist, out for a subconscious stroll!"

V

It was all over now, Jerry said; and he added, fervently, "Thank God!" A great poet had escaped with his neck and his masterpiece. The masterpiece ended with both lovers dying, but in real life they were not married, and so would live happy ever after.

"Have they really separated?" asked Kip.

"I can only hope so," said the other.

"But why couldn't they be happy if they married?"

"God forbid! Poets aren't made for matrimony. A man can't serve two masters. A woman, once she has you tied in legal bonds, never gives up till she's made you her slave. But a poet is the slave of his Muse."

"I'm glad I'm not a poet," said Kip. "I don't understand this affair at all. It was plain crazy."

"You'll make some nice girl a good husband some day, old kid," said Jerry, patronizingly. "You'll be a good and dutiful father of a good and dutiful little family. *Then* perhaps you may discover why a creative artist can't write masterpieces, with crying babies in the house, and a hysterical mother telling him to get out and earn a living instead of creating art. The two things don't mix."

But to Kip, the more he thought this problem over, the more bewildering it seemed. He wondered if all literary masterpieces had origins as fantastic and extravagant. The cult of "art" meant little to him; he kept thinking about the human side of the matter. Roger must have loved Anita to have risked his life—to say nothing of his honor! Now, how could anybody be sure that Roger was going to be happy, separated from the woman he loved?

The younger man went on plying his friends with questions. "Did he just walk off and leave her?"

"It was complicated, like all love-affairs. After that subconscious walk at night on the icy house-tops of Manhattan, Roger decided it was time for some less romantic way to continue his romance. After the baby was born——"

"The baby?" gasped Kip.

"Oh," laughed Jerry, carelessly. "I forgot to mention that little detail. There is a baby, and now there's another on the way. That's the real solution of the problem, you see. Anita will have her children, and everything in the world she needs for their care, and Rodge can write poetry about her."

"And the husband?"

"What's he got to kick about? He thinks the achievements are his, and his heart is full of pride. There's an old saying here in Manhattan, that what you don't know won't hurt you."

VI

In the month of October, when Roger came back from his second visit to the Maine island, the American army was locked in a death-grip with the enemy in the Argonne Forest, and in the long list of casualties appeared the name of Lee Chilcote, wounded. Roger began telegraphing to the people at home, and cabling to friends abroad, and in a few days he learned that his brother was in a base

hospital with an injury to the spine, partly paralyzed, and perhaps permanently crippled. Ordinarily, Roger would have taken the first steamer for France; but this was wartime, and matters were not so easily arranged. As a result of the Meuse-Argonne operations the army would have something over a hundred thousand hospital cases; if all the relatives came running to their bedsides, that would be a complication indeed.

So Roger waited, and fumed at himself. He had finished the story of Anita Vanning, but vowed that he was "sick of the damned thing," and Jerry had difficulty in getting the manuscript away from him, to have it copied. Roger was done with the literary business forever, he declared; it was a rotten fake, and Plato was right in wanting to banish the whole tribe of poets from his republic. Roger could not forgive himself, because he had been dallying with a woman while better men had been going to their death. He had decided that they were better, because they were men of action, while he merely pretended, and never felt anything—only just enough to describe it in fancy words. He had made up his mind to enlist and get into the war.

But alas, he was too late; for the attack of the Meuse-Argonne army was carrying everything before it, and all at once the German resistance began to collapse. One day came the news that the enemy had asked for a respite, and then a despatch to the effect that an armistice had been signed. New York turned out onto the streets and performed such antics as had never been witnessed in a city. The fighting was over, and there was no more chance for a poet to become a hero.

Lee was being brought to New York on a hospital-ship, and Maggie May telegraphed that she and her mother were coming to meet him. So Kip at last would have a chance to see that wonderful girl, about whom he had been hearing for three years! But he mustn't show too much interest, for Roger and Jerry were always looking for a chance to "kid" him. Even in the midst of wounds and death they would not stop teasing a youth about a girl. In fact, the war had had the opposite effect; all the fellows were thinking about girls, and in ways they had never dared hitherto. It was as if nature, seeing so many millions destroyed, had set to work with desperate haste to replace them. War-babies were all over five continents, and so those two of Roger's ceased to trouble Kip's "purity of soul."

Kip would have given much to have Maggie May and her mother staying at the Tarleton House. But such grand people belonged

in one of the fashionable hotels, where they would have private baths, and telephones in their rooms, and unlimited service at all hours. Roger found suitable quarters, including a room for himself, so as to be near them—but still keeping his room at the Tarleton House, in the extravagant way of the rich. He assured Kip's mother that nothing was going to win him from the family hotel, with its atmosphere of home. He would bring his mother and sister to call on the Tarletons.

That was Roger's way, as Kip had known it would be. Kip was a mere hotel-clerk, and sometimes had to turn bellhop, and carry pitchers of water up to rooms; but that would make no difference to people who had the standards of the Old South. Kip belonged to a "good" family, and would never lose that status unless he did something disgraceful. It was the boast of fashionable society in Charleston that when invitations were sent out for the Annual Ball, some of them were mailed to the poorhouse. On this principle, Kip would meet the Chilcote ladies, and offer them his "respects."

VII

Lee's ship came in, and Roger got some sort of pass, and went down the bay to meet the vessel, and stay with his brother during the process of transferring him to a military hospital in Brooklyn. The high-strung poet returned, deeply shaken, with a terrible story of the sights he had witnessed. Lee was yellow and pain-drawn, hardly to be recognized; Roger would get the best specialists for him, and see what could be done. Next day the ladies arrived, and were driven to the hospital; they would go every day, and sit with the invalid as long as the regulations permitted.

Three or four days later Roger invited Jerry and Kip to have dinner with them at their hotel; a great event in Kip's life. He must have new evening clothes, and a new silk tie, and his mother came to his room to fuss over him, and see that his cuffs were the right length and his hair parted straight. Mrs. Tarleton's distrust of girls in general appeared to have suddenly evaporated; to Kip's surprise she casually mentioned several pleasant rumors she had heard about Maggie May.

Kip found both the Chilcote ladies dressed in black. Mrs. Chilcote was stout and maternal, rosy and kind and sweet. She was living here in this exclusive hotel in the same life she had lived at home: that is to say, she sat in a padded chair and had things

brought to her. When she was to visit her son, Maggie May would phone and order the motor-car, and the Negro maid would lay out what her mistress was to wear, and Roger or someone would escort her to the porte-cochere—for of course by herself she could never get these hotel-corridors straight, and know which turn to take. When she went into the dining-room, the head waiter would escort her to the table, and one of several waiters would pull out a chair for her and push it back. So it would go, at all hours of the day or night; the good lady had nothing to do except to smile at everybody, and tell them what a lovely time she was having—except for her poor dear boy—and oh, how fortunate that the horrible war was over, and no more mothers would have their lives broken!

Maggie May was smaller than Kip had imagined her, and subdued-looking in her black dress. She had fine soft brown hair, and features delicately molded, and an expression of kindness with intelligence. She spoke with one of those delicious soft voices that Kip loved, though he had lost it himself; she remarked that he talked quite like a Yankee. He stole shy glances at her, and now and then met her gentle brown eyes; she was looking at him, thinking, "So this is Kip!" But she called him Mr. Tarleton, very primly, and did not say whether she was satisfied or disappointed.

VIII

The party went into the dining-room, and Kip sat by Maggie May. They had to look at the menu and decide what they wanted to eat; no easy matter for Kip, because in all his years in New York he had never entered one of these plutocratic restaurants, and could not help seeing the prices on the menu, and being horrified. He ran his eyes over the immense list of foods, and the only thing he could find that didn't seem outrageous was the different kinds of fish. He said in a panic that he thought he would like some fish, please; blue-fish was a very good kind, that perhaps they didn't have in Louisiana. He resisted all other temptations; no, thank you, he didn't think he wanted oysters, or soup, or alligator-pear salad—at two dollars and a half a portion! Yes, he would like a baked potato, please. Roger, who was attending to the hospitality, and knew his shy young friend, went right on to order oysters and soup and alligator-pear salad for all five of them, and after Kip had had these, plus his fish, Roger ordered some kind of ice cream with a

fancy French name, and it was put in front of the guest. Kip ate it because he couldn't let it be wasted.

Meanwhile, they talked: first about Lee, the main thing they were interested in; they were taking steps to get him discharged from the army, and transferred to a private hospital, where he could have better care. Lee wanted to meet Roger and Jerry pretty soon. He was feeling less pain, and the doctors thought his legs could be slowly educated back to use. They talked about the war, and what would happen about the peace. They talked about New York, and what the ladies thought of it; bye and bye they would do a lot of shopping, because everybody at home would be expecting presents.

Then the subject of Roger's poem came up. It had been copied, but he hadn't brought it to his sister, and she wanted to know why. Roger said he had lost interest in it. Jerry explained that Roger was a victim of overweening pride; he couldn't endure for another man to have done more than he. It wasn't enough to have written one of the permanent masterpieces of American literature; he wanted also to go down into history as the man who had canned the Kaiser. Were all the Chilcotes that irrational? Dear Mrs. Chilcote remarked placidly that they had always had a great deal of pride; you could see that she considered this to be inevitable. If Roger had written a free verse narrative, Roger's mother would be sure it was the greatest of all free verse narratives—even though she couldn't read fifty lines of it without falling into a doze!

Roger remarked that he had been put out of sorts by witnessing so much suffering. He thought he would begin a poem about the war—whereupon Jerry drew his black eyebrows into a frown, and exclaimed: the bummest idea a poet had ever had! The public would forget the war just as quickly as it could; it would be ten years before anybody would be willing to read about it again. No, people would want to read about love, more than anything else, and the story of Anita would be a knockout.

Of course, when Jerry spoke of "Anita," he was referring to the Anita of the poem. Even the up-to-date Jerry dared not mention the real Anita to a sister like Maggie May! A curious situation, about which Kip had swift flashes of wonder. This girl, so innocent, in the traditional old-style Southern way, stood close to a dark and lustful adventure. When she read that highly-charged manuscript, would any hint of the truth flash upon her? How else would she imagine that her brother had acquired such intimate knowledge

of the secrets of unlawful passion? Kip simply could not bring himself to think about Maggie May reading that poem!

IX

Roger had asked for the wine-card and ordered a quart with the dinner; you could still get it, provided you could stand the price. He and Jerry finished the bottle, with no help save from Mrs. Chilcote, who took what she called "just a tiny sip." Maggie May took none, and Kip was happy to have a champion. "I'm so glad you don't drink, Mr. Tarleton," said she. "I wish my brother had as much sense."

"He does his best to teach me," said Roger.

"Tell me," persisted Maggie May. "Is he drinking too much?"

It might have been an embarrassing question, so Roger gave the answer himself. "Any quantity is too much, in the opinion of this excellent young man. You can see his virtues written in his anxious features."

"He's right," said the sister. "With all you've seen, it's a shame you won't do anything but make fun of people." She turned to Kip. "You know, I tried years ago to get my brothers to stop drinking. I failed with Roger, but Lee promised, and kept to it, and now the doctors say that's one of the reasons he will recover from his wounds."

"The war's over now," countered Roger. "I shan't get any wounds."

"I wish you were here all the time, Miss Chilcote," said Kip. "I need somebody to say the things I don't dare say."

"Roger knows what I think," said the sister. Kip was interested to note that when liquor was discussed, her gentle expression gave place to one of decisiveness. "I wish nobody could get any sort of liquor anywhere," she declared.

"You may have your way," remarked Jerry—"if this constitutional amendment is ratified."

"What's become of it? I don't hear anything about it."

"It's waiting for the state legislatures, if they see fit to ratify it."

"It'll never be done," opined Roger. "It's a fool idea."

"Don't be too sure," warned the reporter. "All the teetotalers and cranks, like Kip here, and Miss Maggie May, are making speeches for it. These wowsers and bluenoses never sleep."

"What is a wowser?" inquired the girl.

"I don't just know," confessed Jerry. "But I'm agin 'em."

"It's an Australian word," said Roger, whose business was with words. "It means a reformer."

"Well, if you're talking about booze," said Maggie May, "I'm one."

Roger went on: "I saw somewhere the other day, they've got fifteen states to ratify that amendment. They have to get thirty-six, so it doesn't look so promising."

"What you overlook," countered Jerry, "is that most of the state legislatures didn't meet this year. They meet early next year. And don't forget, the wowsers have been seeing to the election of those legislatures. They've been holding up every candidate, making him pledge himself to vote for the amendment. They have a regular system of blackmail."

Maggie May, sitting across the table from this aggressive young man of the newspaper world, held her soft brown eyes fixed upon his face. "I don't understand you, Mr. Tyler. Don't you think people have a right to demand what laws they want?"

"They've got no right to organize and browbeat legislatures."

"But isn't that just what they have to do if they want to get anything?"

Jerry's heavy eyebrows gathered in his grim frown. "What happens is, they give us a bunch of legislators with the backbones taken out."

"How do you mean, Mr. Tyler? Because they don't vote your way?"

"Oh, thank you," broke in Kip, relieving the pent-up sufferings of years. "If you were only here all the time, Miss Maggie May, to say the things they won't take from me!"

"I'm afraid you're not a good influence for my brother, Mr. Tyler."

"Jerry likes to hear himself talk," explained Roger, "but when it comes to action, he watches me like an old granny. He drives me to writing like a schoolmaster with a lazy pupil."

"That's all right," said Maggie May. "But I'd want to know what you write. If it's things in praise of drinking, like some of the poems in your book, I'd just as soon he persuaded you to stop writing."

Kip sat with warm rapture shining in his large blue-grey eyes.

Such a wonderful thing, that this quiet, gentle-seeming girl should know exactly what she thought, and should say it with such incisiveness! And without being in the least afraid of being called old-fashioned! Without caring whether she was a wowser and a bluenose, a freak, a prude, a cold potato and a boiled strawberry!

X

Lee was getting better; having an elaborate course of massage twice a day, and a series of carefully calculated motions to bring life back into his dead limbs. He was bored, having to lie there on his back all day, with hospital sights and sounds; he wanted all the company he could have, and asked to meet Roger's friends. So Kip took a morning off, and went over to the hotel, and rode across one of the East River bridges in a comfortable big automobile, along with the Chilcote ladies and Roger and Jerry.

It was really awe-inspiring to Kip to share in such luxury. It cost about fifty dollars a day to rent a car like that, and it was hard for him to imagine that people should spend money with such abandon. It put a gulf between him and Maggie May; he could only gaze at her through a telescope. The utmost he could say to himself was that she was the sort of girl he would have chosen, if she hadn't been rich. He wondered, was he the sort of fellow she would have chosen, if he hadn't been poor? He could form no idea, because she was so reserved, and equally polite to everyone. But she seemed to like to talk to him about life in New York.

There was a vast building, crowded with human misery. Anybody who had the idea that war was romantic ought to have gone through those long wards, with row upon row of cots, each with a man, still and white, or moaning, swathed in bandages. Some of them followed a pretty girl with their eyes; the girl didn't behave as she did on the street, but smiled at everybody, trying to cheer up the poor souls, even while her own heart was aching.

There was Lee, with his pain-drawn face, yellow, as if he had been gassed—it was a fact that he had a touch. He was a dark-haired fellow, taking after the mother, not after the father, like Roger. He was pathetically glad to see them, and held out a limp hand. They sat on camp-chairs by the bedside, and never mentioned the war, nor France; Jerry was right, it was the last thing the soldiers wanted to hear of. Lee wanted to know about the newspaper

game; he thought it was romantic to chase all over the city, interviewing literary celebrities, and indicted politicians, and wounded criminals, and whatnot. A fellow soon got tired of it, said Jerry; but Lee said he'd like to have a chance.

Then he wanted to know about the business of running a family hotel. Actually, he imagined *that* was romantic! You must meet so many new people, he said. Kip answered, yes, but they were pretty much alike after a time. One ought to be able to make a lot of money these days, said Lee; he was interested in the business aspect, he liked to figure costs and prices. Kip said they were doing well, but the trouble was, the shortage of everything you had to buy; prices were going up all the time. Lee said, why didn't they raise their own prices. Kip explained that it wasn't so easy, when people had been with you a long time, and couldn't afford to pay more. "But you can't run it as a charity proposition," said Lee.

Yes, he liked to manage things. He wanted to get back to the plantation, and take charge; because now, with the shortage of commodities, if they could get a crop of sugar they would be "on easy street." "If they can just fix me up so I can ride a horse again," said he. "You're not much good on a plantation unless you can look at the crops." There was a nurse standing by, and she said they would fix him all right; but of course you couldn't tell if she meant it, for it was her business to cheer the boys up. Lee said, if they didn't fix him, he would get himself some sort of ambulance with a window in the side. "And a periscope!" said Jerry—and they all had a good laugh.

It was curious, how different the members of families could be. Lee Chilcote wanted nothing so much as to get back to the "Sugar-Bowl," with its black ooze, and mosquitoes, and "niggers"; he wanted to sit at his desk in the plantation office, and go over the prices of supplies, and figure the probable gains from the new crop. He wanted to pay off the mortgages, and mend the wreck his father had left behind. But here was his brother, two years older, who had broken away from all that, and was dreaming of a sensation he was going to make in the literary world. "Thanks for bringing the manuscript," remarked Lee, with his wan smile. "I read some of it. Gee whiz, old sport, you certainly did manage to get up a brain-storm!" Such was the meaning of a masterpiece of poetry to a sugar-planter!

XI

Maggie May told Kip to come to see her whenever he felt like it; and Kip wondered about this, and timidly asked Roger if he would be in the way. Roger said, of course not, the ladies needed to have an escort, and he should go whenever he could. So Kip would call and take Maggie May for a walk up Fifth Avenue, and tell her what he knew about this place and that. She wouldn't go to the theatre, on account of being in mourning for Colonel Ted; but he took her to a concert, and they marvelled together at the beauty of music, and talked very soberly about life and God and immortality and duty and whatnot.

He took her in the subway, which cost ten cents, but interested her as much as if it had cost that many dollars. They went down to the Battery, and looked at the harbor, and went into the aquarium. Kip had lived in New York fourteen years or so, and had never been into the aquarium. He took her uptown to the Museum of Natural History, and they gazed at the bones of terrifying prehistoric monsters, which didn't fit into Maggie May's scheme of the universe; she wondered why God had bothered to make them. Kip said there were a lot of things equally puzzling. For example, what was the use of mosquitoes, or of whisky?

He had lunch two or three times with the ladies at their hotel. He tried to avoid this, because he thought he ought to be the host, but they laughed and made him stay. So he wrestled again with the expensive menu, and said he wasn't very hungry. On one of these occasions there came that cousin of the Chilcotes, the banker's wife, whom Roger had visited on Long Island. Mrs. Fessenden was her name, and she was a tall, stately person, swathed in black furs, with pearls hanging in ropes about her. She was hardly aware of the obscure Mr. Tarleton, and talked about social functions, and important personages whose names Kip had never heard. This put him in his place, and made him aware of the differences between himself and the girl he was secretly adoring. Kip wasn't enough of a psychologist to note that this great Mrs. Fessenden had dark rings under her eyes, or that her conversation was nervous and overwrought,—the effort at disguise and self-protection of an unhappy and burdened woman.

"Cousin Jenny" went her way, to what she said was going to be a tiresome tea-party, even if it was in honor of an escaped Russian grand duke. Maggie May sat in the hotel lobby and talked with

Kip about Roger's manuscript, which he had at last brought to her. Maggie May said of course she couldn't understand Roger's wild words; that sort of poetry went over her head; however, she had got the story, and it was very sad and pitiful—but was it a thing that anybody ought to publish? Maggie May blushed a little, and the gentle brown eyes were averted from Kip. "I suppose I'm behind the times; but you know how we feel in the South."

"Of course," said Kip.

"'The Golden Jail' is a romantic title, and I suppose it will sell the book; but when you read it you gather that the 'Golden Jail' is marriage. Isn't that it?"

"Well, it's a certain kind of marriage," ventured Kip: "When people marry for money, and not for love. You know, Anita was young when her parents married her off, and perhaps she didn't know what was happening to her."

"No, I suppose not," said Maggie May. "And I suppose I've had a narrow upbringing. But I do wish Roger had made his meaning plainer."

"People's ideas are changing," ventured the young man. "I don't think the literary world will be shocked by Roger's story."

"No, but I don't like to have him cater to such people. It hasn't been our way."

"It's supposed to be very wonderful poetry, Miss Chilcote. The publishers are quite excited about it."

"Maybe so," said the old-fashioned girl. "But perhaps it's just as well that mother fell asleep before she got very far in it!"

XII

The Chilcote ladies came to tea at the Tarleton House; and this was an event in social history. All the gentlemen who could possibly get away from business came home early, and had an extra shave, and put on their best frock coats; the ladies sent their fancy things to the cleaners, and fussed and fretted about getting them back in time, and got their family heirlooms out of jewel-boxes at the bottom of their trunks. At four o'clock in the afternoon, there they were in the drawing-room, with an overflow of gentlemen in the office. In due course came the motor-car, with Roger and the two ladies, the very height of elegance in mourning.

It was somewhat like a court reception. Mrs. Tarleton sat at the head of the room in a big arm-chair; a frail, anxious little woman,

not in the least queen-like, but making her best appearance in the purple silk dress which Roger had given her, with the lace fichu to make it modest. Miss Sue Dimmock, the sister, a bright, chirrupy little body, fluttered over the tea things, with Kip for assistant, and Taylor Tibbs, in a white choker, proud as a preacher. Mrs. Chilcote was placed on the right hand of honor, and Maggie May on the left, and everybody bade them welcome, the old gentlemen bowing over their hands in courtly style. Old Southern names were pronounced, and the ghosts of ancestors came to life. Mrs. Fortescue from Charleston found that she was a distant cousin of Mrs. Chilcote's aunt, and Mr. Gwathmey, from Kentucky, discovered that he had once entertained Mrs. Chilcote's brother. In short, the occasion was perfect, and Mrs. Chilcote said it was lovely that her son had such a real home atmosphere in which to live.

In the centre of the festivities was Powhatan; with his best suit fresh from the tailor, and his face fresh from the barber, and his hair and mustaches freshly dyed black. No man there was more chivalrous or more eloquent. When tea was served, he began inquiring: would some gentleman like a bit of a "stick" in it? Possibly Mrs. Chilcote would whisper a secret into his ear! But no, Mrs. Chilcote said that she liked her tea in the old way, with cream and sugar. Pow went on making his jokes, hoping in vain that Roger would take the hint, and produce a bottle from his cabinet, which now had a specially ordered lock, the secret of which Pow could not solve.

But this was a lady's affair, and no one heeded Pow's lamentations over the dark days that lay before them; the triumph of the Puritans, who meant to eliminate joy from America, and reduce the imperial city of New York to a dry desert. What was to become of men who had been brought up in the old school, lovers of hospitality and good cheer? There was no response, so Pow had to take up the subject of his father's activities in the Civil War, and his great-grandfather's in the war of 1812. No one could fail to warm up to that.

When it came time to break up, Mrs. Chilcote said that she would like to see Roger's room; so they were escorted upstairs, and said it was lovely; but Kip knew it was shabby by comparison with what they were used to at home, and what they had at the big hotel. He was ashamed more than ever, because his father followed them, and stood there, stealing glances at the liquor cabinet, like a burglar spying out a prospect. Presently he tried another hint. "Are you

sure you wouldn't enjoy a little refreshment, Mrs. Chilcote?" Kip moved over to his side and whispered, "Please don't make yourself a disgrace, father." So Pow stalked in a rage from the room, mortally insulted by that sanctimonious young Pharisee he had got for a son. The insufferable prig—he was enough to drive anybody to drink, just from irritation! He was a symbol of the prohibition movement, which was going to drive the whole country to drink, so Pow insisted.

XIII

Lee was going back to the home he loved. The doctors said he was well enough to be carried on a stretcher to the train. Here in New York there was snow in the air and slush in the streets, but at Pointe Chilcote the roses were blooming, and it would be good for a sick man to lie in the sunshine. The masseur would be taken along, and in the course of a year or so they would get their soldier fixed up, first so that he could walk, and finally so that he could sit a horse, and ride his beloved acres, and see what needed to be done for the crops. There was a girl waiting for him, and in due course he would marry, and raise half a dozen children—and these children would be acknowledged, and not have to be hidden away and lied about! Could anybody wonder that the Chilcotes were afraid of genius, and of this lawless literary world of New York?

Kip bade farewell to Maggie May. He didn't realize until she was ready to go, how much she had come to mean to him; in fact, it was hard for him to think about anybody else. He was sure that she was the very loveliest girl he had ever met; he had thought it over carefully, and decided that he preferred brown hair to any other sort of hair, brown eyes to any other sort of eyes, and the Louisiana dialect to any other form of Southern speech. When Maggie May suggested that he should come and visit them some day, the tears almost came into Kip's eyes. How he wished he could! It was a real invitation, because Mrs. Chilcote joined in. She approved thoroughly of this modest young man; such a good influence for her erratic poet-son, who frightened her every time he opened his lips.

When the time came for parting, Maggie May put Roger in charge of Kip. "Do take care of him," she pleaded, in Roger's presence. "Don't let him get into wild company."

"I wish I could," replied Kip, gravely. "But you know how it

is, I don't go about very much, and I'm younger than he, and he won't listen to me."

"Roger, I command you to listen to him!" exclaimed Maggie May, catching her brother by the sleeve. "He's to report to me how you behave!"

"All right," said Roger, with a chuckle; but Kip knew how little he meant that. There was never any man more impatient of boredom, and Kip held his status by knowing when to hold his tongue. He knew also how much he was free to tell Maggie May—and it wasn't everything!

This was at the Pennsylvania Station, while they were waiting for the ambulance to bring their wounded soldier. People stood by respectfully when two hospital orderlies came, bearing a stretcher with Lee in uniform. Some men took off their hats—for New York was used to the sight of wounded men in those days, and very patriotic in its mood. The procession went down in the elevator to the train level, and the orderlies took their patient, one under the shoulders and the other under the knees, and carried him into the compartment of the car, and laid him on the bed where he would stay until he reached New Orleans.

The others were crowded into the compartment, with the conductor calling all aboard. Roger kissed his mother and sister, and Mrs. Chilcote began to cry, as she always did at partings. Maggie May clung to her brother, pleading, "Oh, Roger, *do* take care of yourself! What good will it do you to become the greatest poet in the world, if you wreck your health and go like poor Papa?"

Roger said he would behave—and he really meant it at that moment. He gripped Lee's hand, and said, "Be good to yourself, old scout!" Lee promised; he shook hands with Kip and Jerry, and thanked them for their kindness, and said they were to come and go hunting with him on the plantation. Kip and Jerry shook hands with the ladies, and Maggie May was equally lovely to them both, and they all had tears in their eyes, like the sentimental, emotional people they had been brought up to be—and would remain, in spite of all this modern Yankee world. The three young men piled out of the car as it started to move, and there was Maggie May looking out through the window, waving her hand. They waved back, and called farewells, and the train gathered momentum and was gone. None of the three found it safe to talk for a minute or so; for at least an hour Roger was ashamed of "The Golden Jail," and glad that his mother hadn't read it, and that his sister hadn't understood it!

CHAPTER SEVEN · *THE LADDER OF SUCCESS*

I

THE prohibition amendment, passed by Congress at Christmas of 1917, had in the course of a year been pretty well forgotten by the denizens of Manhattan. The whole idea seemed so preposterous to the editors of newspapers upon which the city depended for its information about the world. When the "wowsers" sent them "copy," these editors promptly tossed it to the floor, from which in the small hours of the morning it was swept up by cleaning women, and dumped into burlap sacks, and carted off to be pressed and baled and reduced to pulp again. By this means the editors made certain of putting an end to silly talk about a fool idea.

But now came a series of shocks for these "dripping wet" gentlemen. On the second day of the New Year the state legislatures were assembling in practically all the states; a total of 6349 legislators, all having been elected with the prohibition amendment before their states. Large numbers had been required to declare how they would vote; and now, gathering in their state capitals, they found agents of the Anti-saloon League on hand, saying: "Do you intend to keep your promise?" Each legislator knew that back in his district were numbers of men, and especially women, more concerned about his answer than about any other public question.

The effect of this situation was such as to appall the editors of metropolitan newspapers. There were forty-eight states, and for the amendment to become valid, thirty-six must ratify. Up to the first day of January, 1919, only fifteen had done so. But on the opening day of the new session, the legislature of Michigan capitulated to the wowsers. On January seventh, the legislatures of Ohio and Oklahoma fell from grace, and next day those of Maine and Idaho, and next day that of West Virginia. Four days more, and three more states rang the bell: Washington, Tennessee, and California. The newspapers of the metropolis reported these events in a sort of daze. To the New York "Tribune" it seemed "as if a sailing-ship on a windless ocean were sweeping ahead, propelled

by some invisible force." A panic seized all wet propagandists, and likewise all gourmets and bon vivants, sportsmen and sporting-ladies, patrons of the Waldorf-Astoria and of "Nigger Mike's place," of the Hoffman House bar and the "Alligator Annex," guests of the Tarleton House and customers of Sandkuhl's round the corner.

These ratifications were, of course, reported in other state capitals, where they produced a sort of paralysis, a feeling of the futility of resistance. The "jig" appeared to be "up"; and so, on January 14th, six states joined the rout; Indiana, Illinois, Arkansas, North Carolina, Alabama, and Kansas. On the 15th came Oregon, Iowa, Utah, Colorado, and New Hampshire. Only one more was needed, and on the following day, three bid for the honor—Nebraska, Missouri, and Wyoming. As if on the chance that some one might have miscounted, a day later came Minnesota and Wisconsin. Before the rout was ended, all but two states had ratified the amendment.

The forever unthinkable thing had happened; prohibition was the law! It had been written into the charter of the land, in such a way that it could never be erased, so long as thirteen states continued to support it. One year from date, that was to say, on the 16th of January, 1920, the manufacture, transportation and sale of intoxicating liquor would be unlawful everywhere throughout the United States. It was the death-sentence of John Barleycorn, and Billy Sunday, Head Wowser, preached the funeral service in Norfolk, Virginia: "Good-bye, John! You were God's worst enemy. You were Hell's best friend. I hate you with a perfect hatred. I love to hate you."

II

In the Tarleton House, and everywhere else throughout America, the topers old and young sat gazing at one another, awestricken. What were they to do? The poor ones, like Pow, could do nothing but gnash their teeth, and curse the law, and declare that the world was going to the bow-wows. Liberty was dead as a doornail, when policemen could tell you what you might put into your stomach. Round the corner at Sandkuhl's they said "stummick," and because of the evil times that were coming, each put as much as possible into the aforesaid "stummick," and then went out and got rid of it in the gutter and reeled on to the next saloon. "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may, old time is still a-flying!"

As for Roger, he said to hell with such an idiot's law; it would soon be repealed, and meanwhile he would lay in a stock of what he needed for himself and his friends. But Jerry looked dubious, and inquired: "Where will you keep it? In that cabinet?"—the fact being that the cabinet held only about a month's supply for Roger's thirsty visitors.

"I'll find a place," said the poet. "They're not going to interfere with my personal habits."

"You'll have to find a mighty safe place," declared the reporter. "Unless I miss my guess, the stuff will be as precious as gold."

"I'll rent a bank-vault," said Roger.

"Don't forget, you can't transport it; you'll have to go to the bank to drink it, and maybe the bank won't keep open at convenient hours." Jerry's black eyebrows gathered in a gloomy frown, but Roger refused to let himself worry; he belonged to that fortunate class which had always had its way, and he said that money would still be valued in America.

That was the mood of millions at the moment; it was a time of confusion and despair, a reaction from the strain of war and its false idealisms. Men who had been heroes came home convinced that they had been fools. They had faced death in the trenches, they had permanently impaired their health—and meanwhile speculators were plundering the country, and slackers had got the choicest jobs. In Paris, the old men who had made the war were making what they called a peace; and in the face of that colossal betrayal it seemed that no moral sense could survive; there was nothing but to get for yourself what you could. If you had youth and money, you were lucky; if others were less lucky, you said, "I should worry"—meaning, by a curious whim of speech, that it was the last thing in the world you meant to do.

III

At the beginning of this psychological change, "The Golden Jail" made its appearance; and it was as if Roger had taken his Hawaiian surf-board and got himself upon the crest of a foaming breaker, and gone sailing, sailing! The critics fairly tumbled over themselves to acclaim a masterpiece: some of them on the very day of publication—thanks to that system of literary tea-parties, which enabled the publishers to become the bosom friends of the

reviewers and editors, and tell them what was coming, and what was the proper thing to say and think about it.

Yes, these sophisticated gentlemen knew all about Roger's book, and about Roger; they knew that he was a golden-haired poet from Louisiana, and came of an old family, and was intimately acquainted with the world of departed gentility which he portrayed. They marveled at his skill in word-painting, both of natural and human phenomena; at his historical sense, which set those long-dead figures walking, not upon the stage, but in the very flesh before you. They were enraptured at the poet's "authentic melancholy"—one critic's odd phrase; that mournful contemplation of the futility of human effort, which is the note of literature in a period of recession and defeat. America, which had failed to make the world safe for democracy, would turn back to the days of its ancestors, and show what elegant manners had prevailed among those dead ladies and gentlemen, with what dignity they had lived in their white colonial mansions with period furniture.

Also, the critics marvelled at the storm of passion which swept through the poet's narrative. You could feel the very heart-throbs of his youthful heroine; you saw the blood pulsing in her cheeks, you touched her warm flesh; when she spoke, you heard her voice ringing down the ages. At any rate, the critics said you did, and the public hastened to believe them. "The Golden Jail" was listed as the best-selling book of the week after its publication; and this in itself was sensational, for the critics could hardly remember the time when a verse narrative had sold like a novel.

Upon the Island of Manhattan lived not less than a hundred thousand ladies who had sold themselves to elderly gentlemen for the price of houses and apartments, overstuffed furniture and imported rugs, Paris model gowns and jewel-studded slippers, pearl necklaces and diamond tiaras, limousines with chauffeurs, an outfit of servants, and the other appurtenances of fashionable life in Manhattan. Each of these ladies had plenty of idle time in which to read books and attend lectures and concerts. But the elderly husband as a rule did not have idle time, because he had to sit with his eyes fixed upon a stock-ticker, to get the money to satisfy the needs of his fashionable family. So it happened, when the husband came home, his wife had interesting subjects to talk about, while the husband had nothing to talk about but the "market." Therefore the wife was bored, and wondering if she ought to keep the tiresome bargain she had made.

Now this lady read in her paper, or was told by her friends, about a new book called "The Golden Jail." Only a hint was needed to explain the phrase—she understood that it dealt with her special problem, and rushed to the book-store to get it. She read it through with pounding heart; it was the breathing, living deed she had dreamed of doing, but had perhaps not yet got up the courage to do. It was both incitement and justification; the glory of young revolt; the breaking of all those jails which jealousy and superstition and fear had built about the souls of women.

Maggie May had said that Roger should have made it plain what he meant; but she was probably the only woman on Manhattan Island who thought so. All the others knew exactly what he meant —that it was delightful and romantic to play a commercial trick on the man who had paid for you, and thought he owned you. The story became so familiar among the fashionable coteries of New York that a new word was added to the language. To speak of a man's wife as an "Anita" was a delightful way of laughing at him. Since he had to stay at his office and keep his eyes on the stock-ticker, he didn't know what the name meant; if he asked, the gay company would explain that Anita was an especially charming and delightful lady, the heroine of a recent poem; and so, of course, the gentleman would be pleased.

IV

Another factor which had much to do with the sudden demand for "The Golden Jail" in fashionable bookstores: the rumors which were running wild among the "insiders" as to the personal story hidden in these pages. Impossible to say how this bit of gossip got its start. Had Jerry Tyler, bright young man of the newspaper world, done this great service for his friend? Or had some wide-awake press-agent made a shrewd guess and taken a chance? Anyhow, there was a delicious scandal: a dozen different versions, which you might hear over literary tea-tables, and in the elegant drinking-places of the smart set. You would learn positively that it had happened down in the "Teche country," and that "Anita" was a Creole beauty with whom the poet had eloped to Mexico. You would also learn that she was a Mexican senora who had fled to join him in New York. The number of children credited to him varied from one to the maximum number which a literary Don Juan might have achieved by his twenty-fourth year.

All this, of course, had its instant effect upon the private life of Roger Chilcote. He became the most talked about man in New York, and the most sought after. Invitations poured in upon him. Fashionable and exclusive hostesses carried on elaborate intrigues to get his address or his telephone number; the most adventurous sought interviews, and gazed at him with soulful eyes, and told him that he had given them courage to be themselves, he had taught them the real meaning of life. Roger, a devotee of the art for art's sake cult, found this extremely distressing. He was irritated by the idea of teaching anybody anything, or indeed by the idea that anybody *could* be taught anything; it being the first article of his creed that the human race would always remain the silly and futile thing it was now.

Roger did everything possible to evade these soulful ladies, and when they offered him the treasure of their hearts, he told them that his own heart was broken, he would never love again. Which, of course, made him more than ever the object of romantic legend. The passionate-hearted youth was pining away for his Anita; one wild love had burned out his soul, and he would spend the rest of his life sitting among the ashes. The poet's own violent imagery had set going the metaphor-making faculties of the ladies, and he shared the fate of other creators of cults who are bored by their disciples.

It occurred to some literary columnist to seek out the place where the poet lived, and write a "human interest" story about it. The name "Tarleton House" being in the telephone book, Kip had to spend a good part of the next week explaining to feminine voices that Mr. Chilcote was not at home, and no one knew when he would return. The owners of the voices called in person, sometimes heavily veiled. They would sit in the "parlor" for indefinite periods—until Roger took to entering by the basement, and sneaking up to his room unseen. He had a talk with the red-headed Irish maid who kept his rooms in order; he offered to provide her with a meat-ax, and pay all damages. He appointed Taylor Tibbs to the job of "bouncer," warning him that Manhattan Island was full of fashionably dressed lady burglars.

To Kip this success of "The Golden Jail" brought the fear that they might lose their "star boarder." It seemed inconceivable that a man who was receiving an income of three thousand dollars a week should go on living in a boarding-house at forty. But Roger said, never fear, he knew a good thing when he had it; he would

remain under the shelter of the virtuous head-clerk, and his stern mother and incorruptible aunt! No, sir, if he should move to a fashionable apartment, those female burglars would find ways to get in; but here at the family hotel, he received his visitors in a chaste Victorian "parlor," with boarders passing through now and then, and help always within call.

The poet issued solemn warnings, and Kip, staggered by such revelations of depravity, hardly knew how far to take them seriously. Sooner or later, Roger insisted, one of these ladies was going to fling her arms about him and start to scream. Impossible that any man could have an income of three thousand dollars a week, widely advertised in the newspapers of New York, and not fall victim to the "badger game!" When that happened, Kip must be instructed how to behave—he must rush in and get the lady's arms transferred to his own neck. In the first place, the head-clerk was so modest and dignified that nobody would ever believe it of him; and in the second place, he had no income, so the lady could not "recover." Roger and Jerry would think such conversation as this very witty when they had had a stiff drink or two. Jerry would insist that Kip was pining for a lady's arms about his neck. Jerry was always talking about Kip's being "repressed," and how dangerous this state was. One nice, clean, natural affair with a nice, clean, natural girl would save him from that terrible thing called a "complex."

V

This success of their friend had consequences for both Jerry and Kip. Jerry had the opportunity to meet authors and editors, and his paper put him on literary events and the interviewing of celebrities. Being "on space," his time was his own, and he began writing "sketches," and using his acquaintance with magazine editors to place them. His talents soon won recognition, in the form of an offer from the "Gothamite," a magazine of fashion and smartness, to join its staff. The salary was not much more than he had been getting from the "World," but the prestige of the position was great, and so Jerry moved up the ladder of success. He would be able to help the career of his poet-friend, and Roger in turn would proclaim Jerry as his discoverer and promoter. Thus they formed a literary team, and a social team, also—these tall, handsome fellows, one of them dark, with heavy, beetling brows, and

hawk-like aspects, and the other all gaiety and sunshine, a golden aristocrat who might have put on silk stockings and a ruff, and stepped into a painting of an Elizabethan earl.

As for Kip, he had the panorama of the book-world spread out before him in the talk of these two privileged beings, and that in itself was an education. Then once in a while there would come some "open" event, to which a plain hotel-clerk might be invited. A visiting foreign celebrity would give a lecture, and Roger would receive complimentary tickets; he would say: "There's another damned faker!" and throw the tickets across the table to Kip. "Take your aunt, and come back and tell us about it!" Kip would go, and find it most inspirational, and report accordingly, and Jerry would remark: "He has the soul of a perfect little bourgeois." Kip would remain undisturbed—since he never expected to have a great mind like Jerry's.

Or perhaps Jerry would be planning to take Roger to a studio party in Greenwich Village, and at the last moment the poet would rebel, saying he was sick of wasting his life, and let Kip fill the breach. Kip was so modest, he had to be begged, even commanded; when finally he said yes, he would be as excited as a girl at a debut party. It seemed to him marvelous to visit a studio with a skylight in the roof, and green and purple painted woodwork, and flaming "batik" on the walls, and canvases daubed with ladies having green eyes and hair, and fat naked limbs; to sit on divans with painted pillows and partake of welsh rarebit and pretzels and beer—only of course Kip asked for water.

There was an atmosphere of mysterious naughtiness hanging over these parties. Kip had heard that these young women were "free," and they were certainly free with one another's cigarettes, and equally so with their conversation. What saved Kip for the most part was that the improper things were covered by long Greek and Latin names. What could he make of auto-erotism and Oedipus complex? Things went no farther than talk, so far as he could see. No one made improper advances to him—perhaps because of the fact that he refused the beer. As usual, this refusal made them ask questions, and started one of those miserable discussions about prohibition. Kip was so tired of hearing it, he wondered if it wouldn't be better to say that he had been drunk last week. Certainly that would have won him more sympathy with the young people of Greenwich Village, as well as with the more expensive literary and art sets uptown.

VI

One time Jerry had promised to go with Roger to a dinner-party at the home of a fashionable literary lady on Park Avenue, but at the last minute he had what he called a "head," and declared that he just couldn't stand the racket. So Roger remarked, "I'll take Kip." The youngster flew into a panic, and exclaimed that he couldn't possibly; but Roger took up the notion that it was funny, and insisted that he needed an escort to get him safely home; there was nothing that worried a New York hostess so much as a vacant seat at a dinner-table, and it was hard to find men who wouldn't pull off the table-cloth when they got "squiffy." How was Kip to know whether he meant all this or not? The poet was always exaggerating the depravity of New York; and then, just when Kip had decided that it was a joke, he would discover something worse than Roger had told of!

His mother was called in, and trimmed his hair and shaved the back of his neck, and brushed his suit and straightened his tie, and finally pronounced him fit. Roger took him in a taxicab to one of those huge stone piles with green marble entrances and several lackeys in livery, and introduced him to a charming hostess with a red smear on her lips and nothing but flesh and skin to cover her fifth dorsal vertebra. Kip was led into a drawing-room where a dozen such exposed ladies with their gentlemen were imbibing preliminary cocktails and discussing the chemical constituents thereof. Presently they were escorted into a dining-room with mahogany panels, and seven-branched candlesticks, and roses—in February—hiding a hand-embroidered table-cloth of lemon color. Poor Kip was placed between two ladies, and didn't know a word to say; but that was all right, because Roger introduced him as one of his discoverers, and thereafter everybody gave him credit for being a strong, silent thinker.

It was the poet they had come to hear; and Roger's tongue was loosened, and he gave a wonderful monologue, beginning at eight-thirty in the evening and lasting until somewhere around one—though nobody noted the time. There were practically no interruptions, for the serving was done by two Chinese boys who flitted about on padded slippers, and did not have to have a single word spoken to them. They laid the proper plates before you, hot or cold, and slipped a dish of food over your left shoulder and held it tilted just right so that you could help yourself; they took it

away, and came back with a bottle of wine, held with a cloth, and poured some into the right glass of half a dozen which were lined up behind your plate.

Roger, who was learned in wines, said he could tell from the size and shape of these glasses that he was in the hands of an expert hostess. He said he judged this was a Manzanilla sherry, one of the Spanish light wines, and it was proper to serve it in long tall beakers, in the old style. It was a Xérès, the hostess told him, and he said that such a wine would carry you through any dinner. He added that the taste for dry sherries was a recent one, and he had no stomach for them. When one of the other guests told about some old vintage he had especially relished, Roger quoted Dean Swift: "Sir, I drink no memories!"

Roger drank wines; and his appreciation was so stimulating that the hostess was moved to produce new samples. When they came to the champagne, Roger was happy because this expert hostess did not have it in buckets of ice, in "lobster-palace" fashion, but merely cooled by evaporation of wet cloths. Roger said that extreme cold ruined the flavor of champagne, it "numbed the ethers." He said that the real virtue of wine lay in its "pick me up" character, and all the guests agreed that this "Heidsieck Monopole" had that precious virtue; they were "picked up," and laughter and applause greeted his wit and learning. This stimulated the poet to yet higher flights; his cheeks were flushed, his forehead a brick-red, and there seemed to be lights in his golden-brown eyes.

When the long repast was over, they went into the drawing-room, where they had brandy with the coffee, and then a tray containing whisky and gin, with ginger ale and soda-water, which they drank freely all through the evening. In the end, there was so much laughter and applause, it was a little difficult to hear what the golden-haired genius was saying; but Kip decided that it didn't make much difference, because Roger himself didn't know what he was saying.

Yet, it was never possible to be quite sure; they were talking about such learned subjects, the new imagist poets and the masters of modern French free verse. Roger was quoting passages from Paul Fort; and Kip didn't know any French words, and only a small percentage of the English words employed. He had to remind himself that there were many passages in Roger's published books which sounded as if they had been written by a drunken man; yet these were the very passages which the critics acclaimed

as sublime. All Kip could do was to sit in humble silence and sip his coffee, varied with ginger ale, or a chocolate peppermint, and wait until the time came to get his golden-haired genius downstairs and into a taxicab, and thence into his bed at the Tarleton House. Kip would pay the taxi-bill—because Roger was so lordly at these times, if he ever got his purse out, he would insist upon giving the driver the largest note it contained.

VII

When "The Golden Jail" had got fairly into its stride, and was set to be a record-smasher, the publishers decided that it was necessary to give the author a literary tea, so expensive and sumptuous as to establish his poetical position beyond cavil. Of course Kip and Jerry had to be invited, to behold their demigod raised to full divinity. Kip's mother had to fix him up again, this time for afternoon display. How fortunate when you come of the F. F. V's., and have a mother and an aunt who can tell you what is proper at every moment of the day or night; what color tie to wear, and what kind of flower in your buttonhole! How sad the fate of those who have no such guidance, but must ask their friends, or read Miss Emily Post!

The festivity was held in the most expensive of the Fifth Avenue hotels, a vast apartment on the second floor, got up in imitation of a Versailles ballroom; carved and gilded woodwork, mirrors twenty feet tall, Renaissance tapestry, huge chandeliers of crystal, great fat sofas of brocaded silk. It happened to be a drizzly day outside, so the authors and critics arrived in taxicabs, and the publishers' wives and literary society ladies came in roomy limousines with bearskin robes and liveried chauffeurs. They checked their outer garments, and entered the ballroom, each one of them poured out of the egg, as the Germans say. The public, of course, was not invited, but would read a full description in tomorrow's papers, with mention of what each lady celebrity had worn.

Along one wall of the apartment ran a table, equipped in imitation of the days of Lucullus. There was not merely tea and coffee in urns, but huge silver bowls containing red and golden mixtures with floating ice, and attendants in knee breeches to serve it. You would take a chance on one of these concoctions, served in a thin glass with a tiny handle at the side; when you got it under your nose, the volatile ethers would make plain that your trust in a

fashionable publishing-house had not been misplaced. You would emit a grateful "Ah!", and drain your glass, and begin to realize that the conversation of literary celebrities was more edifying than you had anticipated while driving to the place in a chilly taxicab.

There were many kinds of little cakes with fancy icing on the table, and pretty little peppermints of pale green, and no end of chocolates with pink and yellow cream inside. There was an assortment of caviare sandwiches, and chicken and turkey sandwiches, and those made of the livers of diseased geese, ground up to a paste. There were menu-cards mounted on golden handles, from which you might order cucumber salads, or those made of alligator pears and Japanese persimmons; also fancy desserts invented by the pastry-cooks of Paris and Vienna, and named after diplomats and grand opera stars. In short, no expense had been spared to convince all editors and critics of the metropolis that "The Golden Jail" was the most important imaginative work which had made its appearance during the present decade.

Kip Tarleton had come, prepared to find himself a place against the wall, and stand or sit there for an hour, gazing at this magnificence. But Roger took his shy young friend by the elbow and steered him over to a stout lady novelist, and introduced him as the only person in the room who wasn't famous, and the last remaining modest man in New York; the lady novelist looked into his serious and sober face with the inquiring blue-grey eyes, and said that she much preferred the company of persons who had never read her books, because everybody always said the same things about them. She introduced this plain man to all the great persons who came along, and pointed out the others, and let him fetch her tea and sandwiches—but no avocado salad, no, she was on a diet—all the women in New York were on diets—they were obliged to compete with svelte flappers, who lived on cucumbers and spinach. The lady lighted a cigarette, and when she discovered that Kip did not drink punch, she wanted to know why and how—and so they talked prohibition, the same as in Greenwich Village!

But in between times, there was the "menagerie" to look at; all those marvellous creatures, male and female, who had written books, and had their names and pictures in the papers; all those whom Kip had heard Roger and Jerry tearing to pieces in the course of the past two years. There were celebrities thin and spectacled, others buxom and rosy, others bald and paunched. There were grand ladies who sat in chairs and let the world pay court to them; there

were hungry-looking poets who scouted for a chance to get in a word with a critic who might mention them, or an editor who might pay five dollars for a sonnet. You would have had a hard time guessing who was who in this company. That rosy, blue-eyed little man was a terrible literary tiger who would pounce upon a poor writer and break his neck with one shake; that mild and timid-looking scholar in spectacles was a verbal roisterer, the leader of a literary bachanal.

At one end of the room was a Negro orchestra, and the exchanges of profound ideas went on amid the wailing of saxophones, the tinkle of triangles and thumping of tympani. At first the critics and writers of best-sellers seemed to be indifferent to this Aframerican clamor; but as the punch-bowls were emptied and filled again, the most exalted ceased to "sublimate." Roger and the publisher's lady led off the dance, and the festivities took a jolly turn. Kip was invited by his lady novelist to escort her onto the floor, and while he was keeping off her toes, he was bumped into by a genial elderly editor, who had a gay young flapper novelist so tight in his arms that Kip wondered if his grand-daughter knew he was out.

Kip made this remark to his companion, intending to be humorous; but the lady novelist was a student of the human heart, and serious-minded, it appeared. "At your age," she said, "it is not well to be so sex-conscious."

"Oh, I am sorry!" exclaimed Kip, thinking he was being rebuked for an impropriety.

"Such a remark," persisted his dancing-partner, "indicates that you are in a repressed condition. At your age, that may cause the development of a grave complex." With sympathetic concern she searched his face, so very close to hers.

"My friend Jerry Tyler tells me that," said Kip, in an effort to keep up the conversation.

"Really, my dear?" exclaimed the other. "Then it is probably true. If you are suffering in such a way, it should not be allowed to go on."

"But what can I do?" queried Kip, anxiously.

"You need the friendship of some appreciative woman—preferably some older one, whose experience can carry you safely through this emotional crisis." She smiled benevolently into the frightened eyes of her partner. "Do not be alarmed, my dear," she murmured, gently. "I'll do you no harm. I'll only love you."

Kip had never been in such a panic; he felt himself turning deeper and deeper shades of red. "Oh, thank you, thank you!" he stammered. "But really—you see—." He wondered desperately, should he say that he was married? No, that wouldn't help—he would be told that he needed a divorce! "You see," he pleaded, "I'm engaged!" He was glad there were many dancing couples, and that one bumped into him, and diverted the dangerous conversation.

There came forward a popular author of "Westerns," giving an imitation of the Hopi snake-dance; and then, by request, a reproduction of the Apache war-whoop. Any well-bred person should have understood that this was cultural in its significance; but apparently there were some present who took it literally. A little round inspired gentleman from Georgia popped up and gave an imitation of the "rebel yell," and came romping down the centre of the ballroom floor, with a fair young lady painter on his arm. "Clear the way," he shouted; and when Kip asked, "Who is that?" he was told that it was a famous writer of literary gossip. When the couple had got to the far end of the room, they romped back again, and there fell in behind them a young imagist poet with a Russian dancer, and a futurist painter with the divorced wife of a popular essayist. "The Golden Jail is broken! Whoopee!" shouted the Georgian; and the applause became clamorous. It was then seven in the evening, and Kip took one last look, made some excuse to the lady novelist, and got his hat and coat and went home to his mother.

VIII

Maggie May had told Kip to write to her. He might have hesitated to obey, but for the fact that most of the news had to do with Roger, and he knew she would really want that. Of course, he would have to prepare an expurgated version, fit for a sister. He would tell her about the grand dinner-parties, but without mentioning cocktails and wines, and the scenes with taxi-drivers. He would send critical reviews of "The Golden Jail," leaving out those which welcomed it as an attack upon marriage—and also items in the "smart" papers which hinted at the real "Anita."

Maggie May would answer, although she had no news to be compared with the grand things that were going on in New York; they were living very quietly that winter, doing no entertaining. Since Mr. Tarleton insisted that he liked to hear what was happening, she

would tell him that little Pinckney had been kicked by a cow, but fortunately was more scared than hurt; also, Uncle Ashley Chilcote had been chosen Rex of the Mardi Gras carnival in New Orleans this year; also, the mosquitoes were worse than usual, and the visitors from the North were unhappy. Lee was beginning to walk again; they were all rejoicing about that. She would add: "Please tell me about Roger; is he really behaving? Tell me the truth."

As time passed, and the life of a literary lion became more hectic, Kip began to wonder whether he should not really tell a little. Roger might never forgive him; but still, it might be better. Maggie May was the only one who had real influence upon him. A startling idea flashed upon Kip's mind; that she ought to come up and stay with Roger—and that he could bring it about, by writing a letter hinting at the true situation!

The dawning of this idea set going a long moral struggle in the Puritan soul. "You rascal!" said something inside him. "You want that girl, and you're thinking up a trick to get her!" But something else would say: "No, that's not so! Roger really is going wild, and his sister is the only one to restrain him." It was like the duel in the spiritual interior of Shakespeare's Launcelot. "'Budge,'" says the fiend. 'Budge not,' says my conscience. 'Conscience,' say I, 'you counsel well'; 'Fiend,' say I, 'you counsel well.'"

Kip did not write the letter, but he began making feeble efforts to carry out the sister's injunctions. He would try to enlist Jerry Tyler's aid. "Jerry, why don't you try to hold Roger back? You know he can't stand this business of staying out all night. When is he going to do his writing?" Jerry would agree, yes, Roger was a D. F.—every genius always had a screw loose somewhere. Roger as trying to live half a dozen men's lives; he always had been that way. Thereupon Jerry would try to keep him home from some fashionable "wild party;" and Roger would want to know, what the blazes—was Jerry turning into a wowser too?

It was hard for Jerry to meet that challenge. His theories were all against the exercise of self-restraint. It was as if something had poisoned the minds of these young people; none of them could think straight on one subject. Because somebody tried to stop you from getting drunk, you would go and do it, just to prove that you could, and in spite of the fact that maybe you didn't want to. Or was it that you really wanted to, and found in this passion of revolt a way of self-justification? Kip wasn't enough of a psychologist to solve that riddle.

He would have to wait until the next afternoon, when Roger woke up and felt more humble. But maybe this also would prove the wrong time. The poet would say: "For God's sake, kid, don't hit a fellow when he's down! I've got a head two yards in circumference right now." It was one of the peculiarities of this drinking business, there was never any suitable time in which to try to stop. Poor Kip knew all about it from his years with his father. How often he and his mother had consulted together, as to the proper moment to initiate a plea!

The Big Chief Pow was always at hand, as a lesson to Roger of what the old drinker became. But Roger had no interest in that lesson; he found Pow's craving a joke, and would dally with the old man's hints, teasing him, but finally producing a bottle from the locked cabinet. Out of consideration for Kip and his mother, he would never give Pow more than one drink—just enough to start the verbal fireworks. Roger would wink, and say: "Don't tell anybody! I'm scared to death of that pious son of yours!"

IX

When you have planted your foot upon the ladder of success, you must keep on climbing; and there was one long step for Roger, the making of "The Golden Jail" into a play. A book might bring in twenty or thirty thousand dollars, but a Broadway "hit" might bring a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand—the sky was the limit. Roger would be invited to a tea-party, and discover that the purpose of it was to bring him together with an aspiring young actress who saw herself in the part of Anita; or perhaps a divinely handsome male doll who was seeking a brilliant "costume role." Both the poet and his publishers were besieged by playwrights who wanted the job of dramatization, and by managers offering to produce the play.

Roger was haughty about it all; he didn't need their dirty money, he kept saying. When in the end he announced his decision, it was a surprise to his friends: he would write the play himself! His publishers were dubious, and would have preferred that he set to work on another poem. But Roger said quietly that it would be a simple matter to compress the story of Anita into half a dozen scenes, and make it as effective as in book-form.

He was going to do it at once—and without inconveniencing

himself to run away to Florida or Bermuda. He would perform an act of sovereignty, decreeing the non-existence of the Island of Manhattan, and of all those presumptuous persons who imagined they could lay chains, in the form of "social duties," upon the soul of a poet. He scribbled a few notes to his friends—and these notes speedily found their way into the press; the originals, in Roger's handwriting, became worth their weight in radium. "Please be advised that until further notice Roger Chilcote is in conference with the Muses." The sophisticates of Manhattan were wont to jeer at business men who announced themselves "in conference," and now they were amused by this gay insolence of a young genius.

To Kip and his mother, Roger gave orders that no one was to knock on his door, that visitors were to be turned away without exception, and that letters, telegrams and messages were not to be delivered until he asked for them. His meals were to be brought to his room, and he arranged magnificently to pay part of the salary of Taylor Tibbs, so that he might be free to summon that dark functionary to his service at any hour of the day or night. Then he went up to his room and bolted the door, and rapped upon his study-table and summoned the Muses to "conference."

Needless to say, all this gave a tremendous thrill to the Tarleton House. Down to the crippled old Irishman who served as scullion, every person in the place felt the sensation of being close to momentous events. They went by Roger's door on tiptoe, almost expecting to see ladies in long white Grecian robes flitting in or out. They boasted to their acquaintances of the thing that was going on, the creation of a future "Broadway hit." The Tarleton family might have added considerably to their schedule of charges—had they not been Southern people, unwilling to turn the higher cultural things to commercial advantage.

Of course, a man can't write all the twenty-four hours, nor even the sixteen or eighteen that he is awake. Roger would slip out after dark and walk; he would go up to Central Park and lose himself in its mazes; marching for hours around the reservoir, thinking out his story. He would come home at two or three in the morning, and write until day, and then sleep until afternoon. If all had gone well, he would summon Kip and Jerry, and report progress, and perhaps read passages aloud.

So Kip became really an "insider" to the literary world. He learned what were the prerequisites to a visitation of the Muses:

a coffee percolator, bubbling most of the time, and half-drained cups of the dark beverage scattered about on tables and even on the bed; half-used packages of cigarettes scattered everywhere, and half-filled ash-trays, and floor and carpets suggesting an eruption of Mount Vesuvius; a cabinet full of liquor, with doors never locked, and bottles never empty on every table; finally, a snow-storm of paper, large yellow sheets of "scratch paper," and white sheets of typed manuscript, scattered on tables and chairs and bed and floor—since it was too much to expect that a poet should look for a trash-basket every time he rejected an idea. Impossible for the floor to be swept, because the idea rejected today might become the corner-stone of the temple tomorrow.

The poet lived in a dressing-gown of purple with scarlet hibiscus thereon. But these bright colors only brought out his own faded state; he was haggard, irritable, and his fingers trembled as he lighted the next cigarette. Sometimes he would be lying down, with a wet cloth about his head—the bouts with the Grecian ladies having been unusually strenuous. Once he caught a cold, and was discovered with a red and running nose; cursing God, who had pent the proud spirit of man in a hunk of flesh which was not to be kept from rotting even while it was alive. Let not the adoring ladies see their breaker of jails in such a plight! It would have been as bad as matrimony.

X

Kip listened to the threshing-out of many literary problems, and received a free education in the history of the poetical drama from Aeschylus to Stephen Phillips. Was the new masterpiece to be all poetry, or should the new parts be prose? When and why did Shakespeare shift from poetry to prose, and could a modern poet "get away with" such a device? Kip ventured the humble remark that Roger's poetry could only be known for such because of the way it stood on the printed page; when it was spoken in the theatre, nobody would know which was poetry and which prose. Hearing that, Jerry threw a bunch of scratch paper at Kip's head; but all the same, the young ignoramus turned out to be right—for Roger gave it out that the play was all poetry, and neither actors, critics, nor audience were any the wiser.

Also, Kip got a free education in the art of dramatic construction. What makes a good first act? How can the suspense be

maintained, and what is the best climax, and how shall you release the tension, and let your audience down from the peak of agony? Will a Broadway crowd stand for a tragic ending, in these days when America has solved all the problems and banished all troubles from the world? Roger was the haughty genius, who would scorn the rules about "practical plays," and make the public eat out of his hand.

When you wrote a poem, you just wrote it, and the publisher did the rest; you had only to read the proofs, and attend your literary tea, and lead out the publisher's wife to the dance. But when you had written a play, it appeared that you were only at the beginning of your labors. You had to select a manager, the one with the most prestige and the most money; you had to go to the great man's apartment one evening and read it to him, and hear him tell you that it was a good play, in fact a "wow," but the last act was wrong, no audience would ever stand for such a "hard luck story." You had to argue and wrangle, and finally lay down the law, either the manager would produce the play you had written, or he would produce some other writer's play. The tormented man would almost weep, and say it would land him in bankruptcy, or in the Potter's field; but finally the would throw up his hands and say he would do it for Roger Chilcote, but not for any other man on earth, not even Bernard Shaw.

Then, the drawing up of a contract! Roger, a Southern gentleman, would have used his last dime to pay a poker debt, or to entertain a friend in proper style; but he avowed that this Island of Manhattan was inhabited by hyenas, and he entered in a spirit of gay scorn into the task of showing a Broadway theatrical producer what a poet could do in the way of looking out for himself. It was in the days before dramatists had formed an organization which is the wonder of all the labor unions of the world. Roger had to do the job with no help save from other playwrights who told what had happened to them. The contract had to be rewritten twice, because each time the manager slipped in something which wasn't supposed to be there. Finally Roger had the copying done by his own secretary, and set it down with the order: "Sign, or quit!"

And then, the casting of the play! The sessions with charming young actresses, each of whom saw fortune fluttering its wings above her permanent wave. Each thought this play was written for her, because she had a heart story; she had lived in a golden

jail, and perhaps was doing so still. Roger would bring home portfolios of photographs and newspaper cuttings, and discuss them with the learned Jerry. One or two eager ladies came to the house, and Kip had to interview them; also a couple of the male dolls—such elegantly tailored heroes, with knife-like creases in their pants! Roger would come upstairs tearing his golden hair, telling how one of these handsome monsters had attempted to read a speech from the play, and by God, it was like surgery done with a butcher's cleaver!

XI

It was springtime when the dramatization was finished; and Roger spent that summer in New York, because the play was going into rehearsal, and there was no detail he was willing to overlook. If you knew one art, you knew them all, Roger would say with his quiet assurance; taste was organic—and to Kip Tarleton that sounded tremendously incomprehensible.

The young hotel-clerk went to a workshop and saw pretty little toy sets, and heard obscure words about perspectives and vanishing points and lines of direction and movements of things which remained entirely still so far as he could note. Also there were problems of color, which, oddly enough, were never spoken of by eye-words but invariably by ear-words—tones and harmonies and intervals and so on. He listened to Roger and Jerry discussing period furniture and tapestries and costumes. Other kinds of books were swept from the poet's overloaded tables, and there appeared costly illustrated tomes, picturing late colonial interiors and exteriors, doorways and mantels, highboys and lowboys, and the difference between Sheraton and Windsor. It had to be settled whether scarlet or purple was the proper color for the background of adultery. It seemed to Kip uncertain whether the "decor" was being selected to match the leading lady, or the lady to match the "decor."

The rehearsals began, in an old loft not so far from the Tarleton House. Kip was welcome to go at any hour when he was free, and sit in a broken-backed chair and watch half a dozen perspiring actors and actresses going through the strange motions of a passionate and terrible tragedy. The oddest thing imaginable, for the men were in their shirt-sleeves, and would chat casually about the most commonplace things, and walk through their parts with a manuscript in one hand and a cigarette in the other; yet

somehow, you would see, starting out of it, glimpses of that intense experience which Roger had had two years ago in New York, and which he had worked over into a story of two centuries earlier. Everything jumbled together—and Kip knew a lot more about it than he was free to speak of.

The actress they had chosen to play the part of Anita was fragile and young, and appeared to Kip very much of New York; but Roger and Jerry expressed the obscure opinion that real innocence could only be represented by sophistication. Lilian Ashton did not apparently feel any need to convince them of her gifts; she went through her rôle impassively, with only a flash of feeling now and then. The stage manager ordered her here and there, and the "juvenile" caught her in his arms and whispered words of abandon, and she stood quietly and let him rave. Kip noted that when Roger spoke, she was all attention, and when he was not watching her, she was watching him.

In the hottest summer weather Roger's friends would motor into town to see this show. They would sit about on camp-chairs or lumber-piles or whatever was at hand: fashionable ladies whom Kip had met at the literary teas or the dinner-parties; brother and sister poets from Greenwich Village; playwrights and critics, artists and decorators and scene-painters, all kinds of "highbrows." They watched attentively, and made wise comments in their mixed art lingo.

Kip met here the brilliant young writer of "ad copy," with whom Jerry Tyler had recently contracted what you might call a detachable alliance; she was slender and foreign-looking, with olive skin, like a Gipsy; she emphasized this effect by painting her cheeks and lips conspicuously and wearing jade ear-rings and red and green jewelry, which might or might not be real. She smoked cigarettes in a long, thin holder, and knew all the art people and their complicated interests. Kip was awed by this exotic Miss Follet, and felt a little wicked at meeting her. He told her humbly that these were his first rehearsals, and he was here to see and listen. She replied that he would make a hit with this crowd—listeners were scarce, and much in demand. She invited him to come to her studio parties and listen, and he said he would be glad to. But straightway in his Puritan soul arose a problem. It was his custom to tell his mother about places where he went; and what would he say about Miss Eleanor Follet, and her way of doing what she pleased and not trying to hide it?

XII

Gradually the production took shape, and the actors and actresses threw away their cigarettes, and you could see how the thing was going to be. The sets were ready, and mounted in the theatre and inspected. The costumes were ready, and there was a dress rehearsal, a magnificent event, to which the poet's friends came by motor-car from Newport, the Adirondacks, even Canada. It was two or three o'clock in the morning before it was over, but that made no difference, people stood around and discussed the play until daylight, and were all agreed that it was a wonder, a whiz, a knockout. Kip realized that he was in the presence of world-shaking events.

He had had the fond idea that maybe Maggie May and her mother would be invited to New York to witness the first night. But when he asked Roger, the reply was that this play was not for ladies from the South, it was too much of New York. Kip understood; he had "got" the comments of this smart crowd, and realized its unbelievable cynicism, its absorption in the two elements of sexual excitement and commercial gain. No, Roger's new world would assuredly not blend with Pointe Chilcote!

The scenery and costumes were loaded onto motor-trucks, and transported to Trenton, New Jersey, where the play was to undergo a process known as "trying it on the dog." It wasn't that Roger or his manager cared what anybody in Trenton, New Jersey, thought about a masterpiece of poetical drama; but it was necessary that the play should be acted before some audience, so that the actors might become perfect, and the machine got to running smoothly.

Kip could not afford the luxury of travel, and contented himself with telegraphed accounts in the New York newspapers, and a post-card, representing the capital of the State of New Jersey, scrawled over by Jerry in capital letters: "IT'S IT!" Three or four days later he read another item in the papers, to the effect that the police of the capital of New Jersey had compelled the producer of "The Golden Jail" to tone down some the too-ardent love-passages. Kip had learned a lot about the world, but not all, and it never occurred to him that a wide-awake press agent might have paid the police to take this action, as a means of assuring attention to the play in New York.

XIII

The great night had come. Beginning at six o'clock the previous evening, and continuing until six in the morning, the author, the producer, the stage manager, the stage-hands and electricians, the press-agent, the property-boy, and the entire cast of "The Golden Jail" had been gripped by the anguish of a dress rehearsal in which everything had gone wrong, and complete ruin for the undertaking was indicated. Everybody was living on coffee, cigarettes and liquor, nobody had slept for two nights, and Kip, whose first final rehearsal it was, believed every dire prophecy he heard people mutter or shout. He had no idea that it was always that way with every play preparing for its debut on Broadway.

The demand for tickets on that opening night had run the price up to fifty dollars. Nevertheless, Roger, the Southern gentleman, had seen to it that the Tarleton family had their four orchestra seats, and they were there half an hour ahead of time, in the best their wardrobe contained. During the long wait, they feasted their eyes upon the luxury and fashion of the metropolis, which they had been reading about for so many years in the papers.

The ladies who had sold themselves to elderly gentlemen had now come to see their life-story; and they had put on their backs as much as possible of their price—Paris models and jewel-studded slippers, ermines and sables, diamonds and pearls. They descended from their shining chariots, escorted by their owners and masters; they drew themselves erect, and put haughty stares on their faces, or perhaps seductive smiles, and came through the lobby and down the aisles, gazed at by the throngs, and pretending to be unaware of it—but in reality quaffing this publicity like wine from a golden cup. It was the reason one lived in New York.

A year since the armistice, the country was still in the convulsions of a war-boom. Everything was scarce, prices were mounting—and here were the men who had both the money to buy and the goods to sell. They had gambled in what Wall Street gaily referred to as "war-brides"; they had held the world in their tight fists for five years of agony. The nations had spent three hundred billions of dollars, but from the point of view of these men it had not been wasted—it was a debt which they meant to collect. Next to Kip sat a man who had got a slice of that seven hundred million dollars which the government had paid for battle-planes, not one of which had ever flown in battle. Across the aisle sat a shipbuilder

from Philadelphia, who had burned twenty million feet of the best lumber, for the sake of the cost plus ten percent which the government was paying him. Behind him sat Richard E. Fessenden, the banker, married to Maggie May's cousin; he was now speculating in German exchange, and expecting to make tens of millions. If you had known the insides of New York, you might have skipped from seat to seat and picked out a hundred such men, with their ladies—some of the latter having life contracts, and others having verbal understandings, but not one having failed to get her Paris models and jewel-studded slippers, her ermines and sables, her diamonds and pearls—and to bring them here to prove it!

Here, also, were the providers of pleasure for the rich. Here was the proprietor of a gambling palace, who paid a tribute of thousands every week to the police. Here was the political chief to whose coffers came a stream of such tributes. Here was a lady who owned six elegantly equipped brothels, scattered over this theatre district; and near her the polo-player who had inherited the land upon which these places were located. Here sat the chief of the brewing industry, and near him the little chief who ran a chain of dives and saloons which paid no tax to the government, because it was cheaper to pay Tammany. Here was the head of the dope-ring, and his lady, whom he was about to make into a musical comedy star.

If you preferred the highbrow kinds of pleasure, you might have picked out the providers of these. You might have seen a stout gentleman who conducted a jazz-band all over the world, and a young man who had made a million dollars, writing songs for this band to play. You might have seen painters of rich people's portraits, and decorators of rich people's homes; dramatists who made plays about rich people's sexual intrigues, and story-writers who wrote novels on this theme, and critics who had become famous by criticising such plays and novels, in newspapers which were owned by multi-millionaires, and used as part of their political apparatus.

In short, it was the institution which governs the drama in America, the New York "first night audience." This audience comes, and listens; it says, "Live," and the play runs for a year; it says, "Die," and the play is forgotten in a week. This audience judges, not merely for itself and for the people of Manhattan, but for the whole of America—because the play which has failed on Broadway cannot even get a start on the road. It judges for the screen, be-

cause the feature pictures are made out of Broadway successes. It determines not merely the entertainment of America, but its ideas. The masses go to see what they have read about; they take their children to see it—and so the manners, morals, and religion of America were made over in a single decade.

It was the post-war era, known to itself as the Jazz Age. It had lived through war and battle, and sudden wholesale death by land, sea, and air. If those present had not experienced it personally, they had read about it, and seen it hovering near. They had known the anxiety of conflict and the rapture of victory. They had heard the promise of a new world, and seen their mockery justified. Now they were caught in a wave of inflation and speculation; millions were perishing at home and abroad, while they, the chosen few, became rich beyond dreaming.

These people believed in money, and in the physical luxuries which money could buy, and in the imaginative excitements which money art could contrive. They were giving their suffrage, night after night, to dramas of violence and cynicism, murder and crime, gang-life, night-life, and every kind of sexual perversion and excess. These men and women were living such things in their private lives, and so could recognize them upon the stage. If anyone objected to the spectacle, there was a trained corps of critics to make such persons ridiculous to the world.

XIV

A part of this audience had come tonight because they had read Roger's book, or had read about it in the smart gossip-papers; they had heard the whispers, the twelve or more versions of the real Anita, and the poet's hidden progeny. Others had come because they had read the press-agent's skillfully contrived publicity, and especially the interview with the outraged chief of police of the capital of New Jersey. All had come expecting a sensation, and they were not defrauded.

There was much that might have been said for Roger's drama, as a plea for the rights of young love; there was plenty of room for protest against the sale of love, and against marriage ideals based upon ignorance and superstition. But nobody was going to say these things among this "first night audience." To them the play meant one thing, the right to do "what you damn pleased." To the purchased ladies who composed half the audience, it meant

that, having eaten their cake, they might have it again; while keeping their Paris models and jewel-studded slippers, their ermines and sables, their diamonds and pearls, they might have a young lover, and see themselves glorious and romantic while cheating on a business contract. They sat trembling and shaking, with tears running down their cheeks and ruining their expensive make-up. At the end of the second act, when Anita made her speech of defiance, they sprang to their feet and shouted; some stood in their seats, to get a better view of the golden-haired genius-god in front of the curtain. There must have been elderly purchasers of pleasure who shivered and had the creeps while listening to that outbreak of sex-Bolshevism!

Everybody in the audience found something to suit them. Purchasers of women's flesh, who had become sated and difficult to please, here shared imaginary delights which brought back their long-dead youthful ardor. Women who had put away true love as a thing economically unsound, here saw the dream return with outstretched arms and shining eyes. Professional art-people—managers, actors, playwrights, poets—recognized a masterly job, the sex-thrill brought to life upon the stage. The makers of money admired their kind of job—the thing they called "box-office"; they visioned with admiring envy the golden floods that would pour in.

In truth, it was an Arabian Nights' entertainment, an Aladdin story made real in post-war America. A youth only twenty-five years of age had stolen a beautiful mistress, and made her into a best-selling book, and then into a magic carpet woven of love and romance, fortune and glory. No wonder they shouted to him, and made him come out before the curtain again and again, that they might feed their eyes upon his tall, aristocratic form. He was the golden-haired darling of every secretly unhappy woman in the audience; the dream-lover of each and all. He was dashing and triumphant, yet at the same time pale and worn-looking—as well he might be, considering the tension under which he had been working since the beginning of the year. They shouted bravos at him, and drank in every word of his speech, and the critics went off and added to the eulogies they had prepared in advance. It happened that Kip Tarleton sat next to one of these important critics, and heard what he said to his woman companion: "He writes with the phallus." It was the cachet of Broadway success.

CHAPTER EIGHT · · · *THE BIG CHIEF*

I

THE days were getting shorter, and darkness was settling over the Island of Manhattan; the sun was going away, never to return—so Roger Chilcote gravely declared. They must purchase crepe, and make ready by fasting and prayer for that dread sixteenth day of January, in the year of Our Lord nineteen hundred and twenty, after which there would be no more joy in America, and laughing out loud would be punished by a term in the county jail. In short, the Eighteenth Amendment was actually going into effect; also the Volstead Act, the national legislation which was to carry out its terms; also numerous state enforcement acts which the wowsers had succeeded in jamming through the legislatures.

Men prepared themselves against this dark time in various ways, according to their means. Roger, who received in his mail every Tuesday morning a large check, covering the previous week's earnings of his play, would not fail to make provision against the coming drought. It would not last long, he was convinced; but good liquor would always be worth its price, and was to be considered as a sound investment. He made an arrangement with some dealer, who had a vault in which gentlemen were going to store their supplies, taking chances on their ability to move it when they needed it. His uncles had brought a small shipload of stuff from the Bahamas, unloading it and putting it away in the cellars of Pointe Chilcote. Roger had put up a share of the money—a form of life insurance, he called it. Never believe that any sheriff or constable or agent of wowsers would raid the homes of the Chilcote uncles! And when Roger needed a supply, he would find a way to get it; perhaps having it shipped up to New York in sacks of sugar.

Up to the last day, it was legal to bring liquor into the city, and distribute it to the homes of those who could pay for it. Many of the guests of the Tarleton House were taking measures to protect themselves; Taylor Tibbs carried up so many cases that it began to be a joke in the place, a question whether these old houses would

stand the extra strain. There were bottles in the cupboards, and under the beds, and in trunks down in the store-rooms. Several of the boarders got new locks—for of course the weakness of the Big Chief Pow was known.

The old man's position was the saddest of all, for he had no money to protect himself, and took the impending drought with mortal seriousness. Really, how was anyone going to exist? Sandkuhl's would close up, and the other bars where he was used to passing his days and nights. How could you imagine New York City without a place to get a drink? Some said you'd have to make the stuff at home; so Pow bought for ten cents at a second-hand book-stall a ragged volume which gave the recipes. But then arose the problem of his fanatical wife and son, who would make his life a torment, if they caught him with even the smallest jar of home-brew.

For the present, there was plenty of good stuff in the house, and few could deny they had it, and if you kept their thoughts upon it, they would realize how good a little nip would taste right now. Christmas was at hand, when everybody's heart was mellowed, and mercy and loving kindness were in the air. This might prove to be the last real Christmas in America, so let us make the best of it, and open up a bottle of the real makings, and permit an old-style Virginia gentlemen, one of the last-surviving F. F. V.'s, to show us how his grandfather mixed it in the days when men were men.

But, alas, Pow had reached the stage in the toper's progress when hospitality was not enough. He wanted more than anybody would give him, and he wandered about the Tarleton House, as restless as the proverbial bear with a sore back. A couple of days after the New Year's celebration, his wife discovered him lugging in a tub which he had bought in a second-hand shop, intending to try an experiment with a mixture of molasses and raisins; she made a scene, and delivered one of her tirades, and took the tub to set oily floor mops in.

And that was the end; the infuriated descendant of Pocahontas made up his mind that life was not worth living on so humiliating terms. He waited an hour or two, until his wife was down in the kitchen, and then he took a chisel and pried open the cupboard door in which she kept her clothes. He tumbled them out upon the floor, searching the pockets until he found her purse. It contained about seventy-five dollars, and the Big Chief stuffed it into his pocket, and went out into the world a man, and master of his fate,

striding boldly, and hitting thumps on the pavement with his silver-headed cane.

II

It wasn't the first time he had done this, but he had been told by both his wife and son that it would be the last. So instead of going out to hunt for him, Kip announced that his father had gone to visit relatives, and dismissed him from mind. It wasn't until eight or ten days later that Roger Chilcote became suspicious of this vague statement, and began asking questions; exactly where had the Big Chief gone, and for how long?

When he got the story, he exclaimed, "Poor old devil! We can't just let him drift, Kip!"

"That's what we're going to do," replied the other. "I've nursed him for the last time."

Wowsers and fanatics are like that; people must do the way they do, or the milk of human kindness turns to a hard curd in their hearts. But Roger was different; Roger knew what it was to be "on a tear," and in desperate need of help. His golden-brown eyes became soft with pity. "We can't leave that old man out on the streets in the middle of winter, son."

"But what else can we do? We can't bring him to this house; he'll have the D. T.'s by now, and people wouldn't stand it."

"The poor old soldier! We've got to find him, kid!"

"I'd have to send him to a private hospital; and I've told him many times that we haven't the money to throw away, and won't do it again."

"Well, I've got so much money just now that it's a crime, Kip—a strain upon my morals and conscience."

"We can't let you do it, Roger!"

"You can't keep me from doing it. There is a solidarity among us topers. Perhaps I can have some influence over him. I can get him to promise——"

"He'll promise anything in the world; it doesn't hurt him to promise, but you'll find it means nothing. So long as he can get the stuff——"

"Maybe he won't be able to get any more, Kip. The new law is coming in and it won't be so easy." It was the first time Kip had ever heard Roger speak of prohibition as something that might possibly have some effect. "We'll have to give him one more chance, son."

Under the influence of this gentle warmth the hard curds of Puritan morality began to soften. Kip remembered that dream which had been haunting him, that perhaps, when liquor was no longer to be obtained, his father might again become the playmate of old days. If they got him straightened out this one more time, he might really be compelled to behave himself. Perhaps this friend, with his prestige as a man of the world, and author of a Broadway hit——

"I hate to have you get mixed up in it, Roger. It's like going down into hell."

"Well, son, you know Dante had Virgil escort him into hell. Even Jesus paid the place a visit, according to the creed I used to recite. Why shouldn't a modern poet go slumming? It will add a new color to my palette—a touch of Rembrandt, if you know what I mean."

Kip's acquaintance with Rembrandt was slight, but he knew that Roger would always find fancy words with which to describe anything he was doing. No matter how disagreeable the thing might be, Roger would be gay about it, and would identify it with literary precedents. The playwright insisted that he wanted to do this job himself, without help from any one, as a discipline and a penalty, for having failed to give the Big Chief enough good liquor to satisfy him and keep him at home. Kip understood this kind of upside-down apology—as near as a proud spirit would come to admitting the advantage of riding on the water-wagon.

III

Roger went first to Sandkuhl's, and other places where Pow was known. They had not seen him there for a week; he had spent most of his money, and moved on to cheaper neighborhoods. Either he had drifted uptown to what was known as "Hell's Kitchen," or he had moved over to the Bowery, with its mile long string of dives and "barrel-rooms." Perhaps he had been picked up by the police, and lodged in the work-house, or even in the morgue.

The poet dug out of his clothes closet an old suit and sweater which had been used for duck-hunting. It wouldn't do to wander about in these neighborhoods at night wearing a good overcoat; but with jacket collar turned up about his neck, and an old hat pulled over his eyes, his shoulders hunched and hands stuffed into his

pockets, he could pass as one of the lost men, the disinherited, whom it was hardly worth while to knock over the head.

It was a nasty night, half sleet and half rain, when Roger set out upon this descent into hell, this imitatio Christi on a slumming tour. There was an inch or two of slush upon the pavements of the Bowery, and the street lights had feeble rainbow rings about them. No one was out in such weather except those who had no place to stay in. The lost men shuffled along, drawn into themselves as much as possible, shivering, hesitating in front of a saloon doorway, wondering if they might halt there for a few minutes with safety. Inside would be the reek of alcohol and the steam of filthy bodies; but no one heeded that on a winter night; it was a question of saving the little spark of warmth which was their life, and all they had. In the centre of each place was a hot stove, and if one paid a nickel for a glass of beer, one had the right to huddle there for a period of time which left room for hope.

Roger would enter, and peer about. Sometimes the faces were bowed; sometimes the human wrecks sat before a table, sleeping with head in arms, and the seeker would have to go close and peer at them. Once or twice, when he saw a man who might be Pow, he would prod the sleeper to a grumbling wakefulness; the poor devil would know what was meant, and would begin to stagger to his feet, not daring to protest, for fear of the "bouncer" and his hard fist. From each human bundle arose the odor of stale sweat and moldy garments; in the faces that were raised to him the poet saw reminders of a volume of Doré which had lain on the drawing-room table in his childhood.

Years back an upstate "solon," as the newspapers called the state legislators, had set out to please the rural sentiment by a law forbidding the serving of liquor on Sundays, except in connection with meals. This gave rise to much merriment in Manhattan, which can always outwit the rustic, whether by selling him a gold brick, or by the manufacture of "Raines law sandwiches." The saloons of the city became "restaurants," by virtue of a table or two, and a bartender who would bring your "meal" to the table. You ordered a sandwich and a glass of beer, for the price of the beer; you did not touch the sandwich, but left it to be "sold" again, and thus it would do duty all Sunday long.

Also, there came a more sinister development, the so-called "Raines law hotel." What made it a "hotel" was several bedrooms upstairs, and women waiting, and a register in which you wrote

a fictitious name. The rural senator and his law had long since been thrown into history's scrap-heap, but the evil he had done lived after him, and so it happened that Roger would see the faces of women, some bloated and blowsy, some pale and crimson-painted, masks of death, peering from behind a swinging door. They would smile, and say, "Hello, kiddo!"—making it plain to a poet that they were equally as willing as the ladies of Broadway and those of Park Avenue.

Roger went on, the whole night through—for it was not a job which could be divided into parts; if he came back the next day, his quarry might have shifted to the district already inspected. At one o'clock in the morning the saloons all closed their front doors and made it necessary for Roger to go to the "Family Entrance," an added inconvenience. There was a thing called "war-time prohibition," supposed to be in force, and all these saloons were technically out of existence; but here they were, still holding on, and getting rid of surplus stocks. The government appeared to be content if they refrained from selling to soldiers and sailors.

There were saloons on all the side-streets, and dives in the basements, damp and moldy cellars known as "barrel-rooms," where bums and wastrels spent the night crouched in a corner for the price of a glass or two of beer. There would be a barrel of stale drink, collected from leavings in the bottoms of kegs. Sometimes it would be fortified with alcohol—a process called "spiking" it. Again it would be spoiled vinegar, or a concoction of Jamaica ginger, or even of wood alcohol; there was no analysis of the "rotgut" these poor wretches imbibed. They would go crazy, and there would be fights and stabbings; the papers seldom troubled to report such affairs, unless some one was killed. They would become delirious, and the patrol-wagon would come and haul them away. Next day they might go blind from the effects of the drink—the public hospitals had a stream of such cases.

Here also one found women; frowsy hags, with skirts trailing in the filth, in the style of many years back; bloated creatures with bleary eyes, and mouths pouring obscenities. No man so low that there was not some woman to be his mate, for a price that would buy her another drink, and a brief surcease from torment. The patrol-wagons took female as well as male, and if it was a "fighting-drunk," she was treated on a basis of equality, with a hickory club. The golden-haired poet who wanted to add a new color to his literary palette, yielded to the blandishments of a grey-haired harridan

so far as to buy her a "man-sized drink." She poured it down, and they marched forth into the rain arm in arm, the woman singing a song which had been popular before Roger was born: "They do such things and they say such things on the Bowery, the Bowery—I'll never go there any more!"

IV

When finally the Big Chief was found, it was thanks to Taylor Tibbs, who, like a faithful dog, had a nose for his master. Taylor came to "Mista Roger," reporting that he had found "Mista Pow" in the rear room of a saloon on Tenth Avenue; he was "terrible bad," said the Negro—and so Roger postponed an engagement with the Muses, and slipped on his overcoat and hailed a passing taxicab.

The descendant of the First Families of Virginia sat at a sloppy beer-table, with his head lying in his arms; his hat was missing, and so, alas, was the silver-headed cane; his clothing was filthy, as if he had been rolling in the gutter. When Roger spoke to him he was in a half stupor, and looked up, dazed, his face grey, matching a two-weeks' growth of beard; his moustache and hair had grown out grey, producing a weird contrast with the top part dyed black. His hands were shaking, and he caught the other's hand, and moaned: "Oh, Roger, my friend! I am in hell!"

"Sure, I know," said the poet. "I've been there, old sport."

"Roger, they poisoned me! They gave me knockout drops!"

"It can happen," replied the other. He understood that this was the beginning of the Big Chief's self-defense. Never would it be that Pow had stolen his wife's money and gone off on a spree; no, it would be that he had been poisoned, which in turn would be because he had to live among these "damn Yankees"—which would be because General Lee had lost the battle of Gettysburg.

"Believe me, Roger, I was getting along all right; I was taking care of myself; but they gave me knockout drops, and took all my money, and what could I do?"

"It's all right now. I'm going to help you."

"Roger, I'm nearly crazy. If I don't have a drink——"

"Sure, you got to have a drink," said the poet. "An old hand like you or me can't break off all at once." To the bartender he commanded, "A good stiff whisky, and a lot of soda."

So Pow knew that he was in the hands of a Southern gentleman.

He had to be helped to get the drink down his burning throat; after which he sighed, and a little life came back into his tortured eyes. "My God, Roger, if you only knew what I've been through!"

"It's all right," said the other, cheerily. "We're going to get you out of it."

"Roger, I can't go home! Don't take me there. They expect me to break off all at once, and I can't, I'll go loony!" A pitiful thing, to hear a man well into his fifties, with grey hair, beginning to whimper like a little cur dog!

"No, no, old scout!" said Roger, taking him by the arm. "I'm going to see that you get what you need."

"They're a bunch of fanatics at home, Roger; they've driven me to this, because they don't understand, they don't make allowances."

"I won't let them get hold of you, Pow."

"What will you do, Roger?" He could not be put off with vague words in this matter of life and death.

"I'll take you to a good hospital."

"You'll have to see that they treat me right, boy. If they shut down on me, I'll go clean off my head." His two hands had got hold of the poet's, and were going like electrical vibrators. "I'm suffering the torments of the damned, Roger. I've been poisoned—poisoned, I tell you—the damned villains wanted to rob me—it's a racket they work."

"I'll help you now. Come ahead. Have a little faith in me, old sport." The poet put his soul into his commands.

"Where are you going to take me?"

"To St. Stephen's hospital."

"Oh, Christ no, Roger, not one of those religious places. They'll put me in a cell, they'll tie me in a strait-jacket—believe me, I know——"

"St. Stephen's is a Catholic place, Pow. They understand what human beings are like. They don't expect too much of us, like the Puritans."

"You'll have to promise to come and see to it, Roger!"

"I'll come without fail."

"You must tell them you're coming, so they'll know they can't tie me up!"

"Sure, I'll tell them. I'll come every day, and if they tie you up, I'll take a paddle to them. Come along now."

He got the trembling figure under the arm-pits, and lifted him

to his feet. There was strength in Roger's tall frame, and he half led and half carried the burly Pow out to the waiting taxi, and bundled him inside. When they came to the hospital, the driver helped him up the stairs—it was part of the recognized duties of a taxi-driver, entitling him to an extra fee. In the bare white-walled reception-room, there looked down upon them a merciful Savior with a crown of thorns and a golden halo about his head; also a blessed Virgin with a bleeding heart exposed on the outside of her dress, and with a dove sitting on it. There came a nun, in billowing black robes with white trimmings—an apparition at which Pow stared with frightened eyes; but he was partly reassured when Roger specified that the unhappy victim of "knockout drops" was to be carefully "tapered off."

The nun, who heard the same story several times each day, smiled pleasantly, and said they always did that. Roger gave the patient's name and address, age, birthplace, and marital status, also his own name and address; with this gentle, rosy-cheeked saint he was safe from the embarrassment of being recognized as author of a Broadway play which had recently been denounced by the archbishop in St. Patrick's Cathedral. Roger counted out five of the crisp ten-dollar bills which he had got from the earnings of that "vile anti-social play"; and here in modern Manhattan, as in ancient Rome, the money had no smell. The handmaiden of Christ received it without repugnance, and two male attendants clad in white duck came and led the pitiful victim away—with Roger once more cautioning everybody that the angle of the "tapering off" should be of the utmost possible acuity.

V

Here was romance, as you lived it on the Island of Manhattan: to make such a pilgrimage through the Streets of Lost Men, with a visit to the alcoholic ward of a Catholic hospital, and then return to your home, and take a bath, and dress yourself according to the last word of fashion, in a pleated soft white shirt and a dinner-coat trimmed with satin braid, and step into a taxi and be driven to an address on Park Avenue, and have a liveried attendant carry you in a bronze car some thirty stories into the air, to what was known as a "pent-house," a country villa on the roof of an apartment-building, complete even to the miniature putting-green, and a glass house in which you could pick your own strawberries and

fresh mint for juleps, and a fish-pond in which you might catch mountain brook trout for the third or fourth course of your dinner. In this retreat among the clouds lived people so rich that they had given up the effort to spend their money, and indeed had lost interest in it; turning it over to the care of high-class administrators, who were forbidden to trouble the owners with financial statements oftener than once a quarter.

When you were seated in a dining-room that had been boxed up and brought intact from a castle in Bohemia, and while silent uniformed servitors were bringing you rare dainties upon gold plate, what could be more outré and delightful than for a literary lion to invite those present to guess where and how he had been spending the last two days and nights? Let them name the most bizarre occupations their fancy could suggest—flying with the air-mail, or exploring the bottom of the sea in a diver's suit, or lying in the arms of a beautiful mistress, or brewing a poison to get rid of her—no, they would never guess that Roger Chilcote had descended into hell, and the third day had risen again, and seen a vision of himself hanging in a frame on a white plastered wall, with a crown of thorns and a golden halo about his head!

So a poet played with his auditors, and kept them laughing over their own bewilderment. Had any of these elegant book-lovers ever sojourned in Italy, and did they remember Dante's picture of the habitations of the lost? This genius who knew all poetry in all languages, first treated them to the sonorous Italian, and then translated it for them: "Here signs, plaints, and voices of deepest woe resounded through the starless sky, for which I felt my tears begin to flow. Strange tongues, horrid cries, accents of grief and wrath, voices deep and hoarse, with hands smitten in despair, made up a tumult, which ever whirled through that air of timeless gloom, even as sand when whirlwinds sweep the ground."

How strange to learn that voices such as this could be heard within a mile or two of this villa on an artificial mountain-top! Where was the place, and would Roger Chilcote take them to it? When at last they understood that it was no more than a slumming-tour on the Bowery, they realized what it meant to be a poet, and to weave a halo about the most obvious things. This was what you expected from a "lion" when you fed him, and was why you took so much trouble to snare him, and why your richest and most utterly bored friends took a chance on one more dinner-party.

Of course, having got onto the subject of the Bowery, and its

bums for whom nothing could be done because they spent everything they got on drink—then, of course, you talked about prohibition, and the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead act, which were due to go into effect in a couple of days. The thing which really interested you was not the bums, who were hopeless, but yourself, who might be inconvenienced; so you discussed what you were going to do about this lunatics' law. Gentlemen who had never been inconvenienced told—in the strictest confidence, but with several waiters listening—what stocks they had purchased and where they had them stored. Ladies who made good their right to do whatever the men did, announced their theories of anarchism and direct action, and proceeded to put them into effect. They had just seen a vision of lost souls on the Bowery, and of victims of delirium tremens tied up in strait-jackets; but, if you expected this to cause any guest at a pent-house dinner-party to hesitate in draining the delicate, wide, champagne glasses or the tiny narrow liqueur glasses—you would be showing yourself a crude person, wholly out of tone with the easy self-possession prevailing among the cultured wealthy.

VI

Came the Day, as the movie titles used to say: that Day about which everybody had been talking for the past twelve months in America—after which it would be illegal to manufacture, transport, or sell any beverage having an alcoholic content greater than one-half of one per cent. It seemed strange that a Day on which the expectations of a hundred and ten million people had been concentrated for a year should come and go, and seem like any other day, with no earthquake or eclipse, no bombs bursting in air, nor firecrackers exploding on the ground. The bar-rooms looked empty and the bartenders sad; the customers came with baby-carriages and children's express-wagons, and bought the last bottles at bargain prices, and carried them home. In the lobster-palaces the proprietors gave away the last champagne to their customers. One imaginative host had his place equipped with black table-cloths, and a coffin filled with black bottles, and a chorus of weeping bacchante. The guests added their tears to the free champagne, and sat for hours discussing the problem: where are we going to get ours tomorrow? and where are we going to get it next week?

The prospects looked unpromising. The newpapers announced

that a hundred Federal agents would start promptly on the stroke of midnight to enforce the new law, with fifteen thousand policemen of the city to aid them. All liquor stocks found after that moment would be put under bond, and any that were sold or transported would be confiscated. On the following Sunday all wowsers and bluenoses were going to church, to give thanks for the new dispensation, and promise good conduct. One prohibition leader estimated that the law could be enforced for five million dollars a year.

But there were false notes in the sweet chorus. The governor of New Jersey issued a proclamation in defense of state's rights; the people of his state were not bound by the amendment, and he would protect them in the exercise of their right to make liquor of not more than twenty-five percent alcoholic content. Apparently this "dripping wet" governor had not heard that the Civil War had been won by the North. He didn't know the past, nor did he know the future—he could not see himself ten years later, a victim of alcoholism, blowing out his own brains!

The United States Supreme Court would decide whether or not the sovereign State of New Jersey was bound by the United States Constitution. The Supreme Court would decide a host of other questions bearing upon the law and its enforcement. When Federal agents smelled the sickish odor from a secret still, did they have the right to go in and get the law-breakers, or did they have to apply for a search-warrant, and give a chance for the law-breakers to be "tipped off"? And what about the practice of the restaurants of furnishing "set-ups" to their patrons—glasses and ice and the "mixings," while the patron brought his alcohol in a hip-pocket flask? Also that grave constitutional question, raised by the newspapers at the very outset—should the government confiscate a pair of trousers which had been used for the transportation of liquor?

VII

The Big Chief was brought home in a taxi-cab; his cheeks grey in color, his hands trembling, his spirit subdued. He retired to his private quarters in back of the office, where he stayed, growling like an old bear in a cave. He would pick up a paper, and read a paragraph, and then get up and begin to pace about, muttering to himself. He went out but rarely, for the weather was bad, and all his places of refuge were closed. Sandkuhl had quit, and all the

saloons up Sixth Avenue had signs in front, announcing that they were being remodeled, and would reopen as ice cream parlors or delicatessen shops.

The principal occupation of the Big Chief came to be playing cards with himself. He would set his books and tobacco things onto the floor, and spread the cards on the table in front of him, and sit and shift them about for hours; at a crisis, he would steal a glance about to make sure he was alone, and then he would cheat himself. So he always won, and it was the nearest he got to the good old days. If somebody came to visit him, he would brighten up, and be the sporting man and Cavalier. But there was no longer any "hospitality" or "good cheer" to be had in his room; he would point to the liquor cabinet, stuffed with old magazines, and shake his head sadly, saying that the wowsers and bluenoses had licked him.

Kip was kind to the prisoner, and patient with his impatience. They would play a game of cards now and then, and Kip would joke, and try to help the old man over this difficult period of getting used to prohibition. The son could afford to be patient, since he was having his way—the thing he had longed for all through his boyhood. The corner saloon was gone, and the Big Chief had to behave, willy-nilly.

Also, Kip had another reason for being pleased with life, and genial to all the world. For the first time in years, he was looking forward to a vacation; he had received an invitation to visit Pointe Chilcote—a regular invitation, written by the mistress of the household, none the less valid because the handwriting was primitive. It had been reinforced by Maggie May, and also by Roger, who commissioned this proper youth to represent him at home. To visit the "Teche country" at the loveliest time of the year, the early Southern spring, when the fields of young cane were starting their growth, and the mocking-birds were singing their love-music! Kip's mother and aunt eagerly discussed a problem between them. Was it just that the Chilcotes were being polite to friends of Roger? Or could it be that the lovely Miss Maggie May was taking an interest in an especially well brought-up hotel-clerk?

The time for the visit was near, and Kip's clothes were in order, and he had learned by heart his mother's lessons as to what he was to wear on this occasion and that; also he had imagined in his secret heart what he was going to say to Miss Maggie May on this occasion and that. But suddenly fell a blow of fate which laid all his dreams in ruins. Taylor Tibbs entered "Mista Pow's" room with the cus-

tomary cup of morning coffee, and stopped short and nearly dropped the tray, seeing the Big Chief lying flat on his back, with blood running from a cut on his head. He was moaning, and the Negro ran out, shouting for Mrs. Tarleton, and Kip, and Miss Sue; the place was in an uproar, with frightened servants crowding the doorway, and someone telephoning for the doctor, and Taylor Tibbs coming with a flask of whisky from the repository under Mr. Gwathmey's bed.

Alas, poor Pow—beyond the help of even the best Kentucky Bourbon! He was hardly able to speak, and could not lift himself. Soon the doctor gave his verdict—it was a paralytic stroke; the patient's entire right side was helpless, and would stay so for a long time, perhaps forever. The old man was laid in his bed, and there were no vacations for his son, nor for any of his relatives or servants. One of Pow's faculties which had been spared by the stroke was the demanding one, and another was the complaining one. He would lie and find fault with the state of the world, and especially with its nursing department. His pipe had gone out, and there was nobody to light it; when he pressed the electric button, how could he know if the bell was ringing or not, when nobody had paid attention for at least five minutes? Nobody wanted to talk with him, nobody came to read the paper to him, nobody had gratitude, or even common humanity.

Poor old wreck of a man, with all his pride and eagerness for life, baffled, but still raging inside him! His right eyelid hung limp, and the right side of his mouth was motionless, giving a ghastly twist which the best-dyed mustache could not hide; but even so, let anybody mention the pride and glory of the old South, and there would be a flash in the one well eye, and a whispered pronouncement that it was impossible to find decent cooking north of Maryland. Let anybody mention the wowsers, and the havoc they had made of the good life in America, and the old warrior would start up on his left elbow and hurl his defiance. If it was one of his old cronies who had come visiting, he would beg: "Just a little nip, Judge"—or maybe: "A little snifter, Colonel. You know I'm safe now—I'll never run wild any more."

VIII

So Kip had to write to Mrs. Chilcote, expressing his regrets; all his spare time was needed to help take care of the invalid. Mrs.

Chilcote said: "What a dear boy, so dutiful!"—an old-fashioned word for an old-fashioned virtue. She told Maggie May to write and say how sorry they all were; and Maggie May told how Lee was learning to ride a horse, and wished that Kip might be learning also. The new crop was in the ground, and she was listening to the mocking-birds while reading about snow-storms in New York.

But there was no time for the head-clerk of the Tarleton House to spend in repining. He had never been more busy, with the flood of men pouring back from overseas, and the post-war prosperity, the like of which Manhattan had never known. The men who had made millions selling things to the government now made more millions buying them back. They sold to the war-devastated nations the means of rebuilding—having first loaned them at high interest rates the money to finance the deal. With these paper profits they made trips to New York, with their wives or lady-loves; and of course on the first night of their visit they wanted to go to the theatre. What would they choose, if not that sensational melodrama of illegitimate passion, "The Golden Jail"? So the flood of wealth poured into Roger's lap, and he entrusted it to a lively young stockbroker of his fashionable world, who turned it over again and again, into sums beyond imagining.

Jerry Tyler also was sharing in this post-war glory. The smart magazine for which he worked had raised his salary twice, and he spent his time rushing about in taxicabs from a swanky tea-party to a brilliant opening night, and from there to a dazzling supper-party in a gilded cabaret. From all over the world the intellectual élite poured in, to claim their share of the prosperity of New York. The handsome and popular editor picked up gossip about them, what they looked like, what they were writing, or singing, or dancing, what salaries or fees they received, what ladies they brought to the dazzling supper-parties. Jerry also had met the fashionable young stockbroker, and was being "carried" for "blocks" of this or that. To listen to the gossip between Jerry and Roger was to be borne aloft on golden wings, to the topmost pinnacles of this Olympus of the Machine Age.

But Kip missed the greater number of these conversations, because Roger came less often to the Tarleton House. He still made the place his headquarters, but he would send a messenger for his mail, and not show up for several days. Roger was tied up in another "romance"; and, as had happened in the case of "Anita," Kip gathered hints, but did not get the full story until it was all over.

This time it was Lilian Ashton, star of "The Golden Jail"; that fragile brunette beauty who had embodied Roger's Anita to the Island of Manhattan. "Love's ecstasy and agony made flesh"—so one of the critics had hailed her on the opening night; and apparently a woman could not enact such a role, and become a symbol of it to the Island of Manhattan, without seeking to make it real to herself. Kip remembered how, in the days of the rehearsals, she had fed her eyes upon the golden-haired creator of all that was most important to her—the glory and the dream, as well as the contract at twelve hundred per week. The time came when these two moved to each other as the river to the sea.

When she was in the poet's arms, then panic seized her, and she drew back, crying, "No, Roger! I am not worthy of you! I have soiled myself!" But Roger laughed, and said, "I'm no spring-chicken myself, kid. Forget it!" Such was romance made real; and now there was a passionate love-affair going on—the two could hardly bear to be apart, and when other ladies came swarming, making their eyes at the golden-haired poet-god, Lilian would have clawed their eyes out—except that Roger helped her to laugh at them.

IX

It was a love-story exactly to the taste of the intellectuals of Manhattan. All the world knew about it, and imagined it when they saw Anita clinging in frenzy to her young surveyor, and when she shouted her defiance across the foot-lights. All women envied this first among stars, and all men envied this poet-laureate of passion.

But to Kip, who saw it from the point of view of a hotel-clerk, it had its deplorable aspects. For one thing, it destroyed all chance of Roger's returning to the simple life; it sealed his brotherhood to the owls and the bats. Except on matinee days, the life of Lilian Ashton began at two o'clock in the afternoon, when the maid brought her coffee and toast, and newspapers, in which she read the gossip about the theatrical world, and those smart persons whom she considered of importance. After that she bathed and dressed, and went with her poet to a literary tea, or a reception given by the rich who condescended to play with art. The young couple would flit from one to another of these affairs, the cynosure of all critical eyes; then, at seven-thirty sharp, Lilian would be at the theatre, to "make up," and rest until the time for her appearance upon the stage.

That left her lover free to attend dinner-parties. But always at eleven he was at the theatre. They would have an engagement for one of the dazzling suppers in a private dining-room in some showy restaurant, or else in a cabaret, with a huge sea-shell of gold and scarlet and purple covering the ceiling, and a jazz-orchestra blaring, and a dancing floor so crowded that the couples could only stand and wiggle. As a rule it was four or five in the morning before this party broke up.

The worst aspect of this "night life" was the drinking. At the tea-parties, you seldom found tea in the cups, but generally cocktails. At the receptions there would be iced punch, and it had to be strong, for what New Yorkers wanted was the "kick," and they wanted it without delay; if you didn't provide it, they would pull it from their own hip-pockets. The dinner-parties were a continuous libation, while the suppers were a flood. How else could you justify yourself for sitting at a cabaret table for five hours, interrupted only by dancing? There was a new phrase coming in, "making whoopee"; it meant shouting, singing, upsetting bottles and glassware, dancing on the table-tops, with promiscuous embracing all over the place.

Sandkuhl's might close, and the other saloons up Sixth Avenue; but it quickly became apparent that nothing was going to happen in Manhattan to bar the rich from their main source of pleasure. There was a few months' hesitation, while the town waited to see what the hundred prohibition agents were going to do, and while an arrangement was worked out with the fifteen thousand Tammany policemen. Cocktails took to tea-cups, and bottles became flat in size, and curved so as to fit to buttocks. On this basis the "night life" was resumed; from one source or another the "real stuff" flowed freely, and if it were doubled or tripled in price, that was an advantage, because people had so much money they didn't know what to do with it, and to pay a high price for something was the only way to get a sense of distinction. The "booze arts," as Roger called them, became more refined and exclusive.

X

Winter was followed by spring, and spring by summer, and "The Golden Jail" was still drawing crowds, and Roger was still basking in glory, though badly worn, and showing it in his face and the trembling of his hands. Lilian, too, was feeling the strain, and

learning to refuse the contents of tea-cups, saying that she had to "cut it out" on account of her work. Both of them longed for the country, they said; but it looked as if the play were going to run all summer.

However, fate had other plans. There were forces working in America which were beyond the ken of night-club butterflies, and were destined to knock off the golden dust from the pretty wings. The masters of Wall Street discovered that the well-spring of profits was drying up, and they met in their secret places to decide what should be done. Somebody had to be "deflated," and the choice fell upon the least organized and most helpless class in America, the farmers. One fine day the Federal Reserve Board issued to its branches in the wheat country a suggestion to raise the discount rates to country banks which made farm loans; and so, before that sun had set, there began a collapse in prices, which did not stop until the value of the farm-lands of America had been cut in half, and in the Northwest there were counties in which every single farm had been "sold for taxes."

Then, too late, the masters of Wall Street realized that when farmers have no money to buy goods, the manufacturers of goods have no customers. There came a panic in Wall Street, and all those paper profits which had been sustaining the cabarets and night clubs were blown away in a storm of terror. Roger Chilcote spent two days among the lunatics and suicides in the board-room of his stockbroker; he spent two nights pacing the floor, cursing everything in the universe but his own folly. Then suddenly, in the midst of the uproar, he stopped, and reminded himself that he was a great poet, and also a Southern gentleman; he put an airy smile upon his haggard face, and washed his hands in those drops of moisture which two days ago had been a golden soap-bubble. He announced that the purpose for which he was in the world was to experiment with life, and that he had just been acquiring some interesting atmosphere for his next poetical drama. He went to bed and slept for twenty-four hours, and when he woke up he was the same old Roger, unchastened and unsubdued.

He still had his play, and Lilian had her twelve hundred a week—or so they thought. But alas, the golden butterflies stopped going to the theatre, except on passes; the country customers who had been planning a trip to New York suddenly decided to wait. The manager of "The Golden Jail" assembled the members of the cast, and informed them that he could keep going, provided they agreed

to cut their salaries in half. Two weeks later he assembled them again, and told them that even on half-pay he was "in the red," and would close the show for the summer, hoping to reopen in the fall, when good times would surely return.

Thereupon an imaginative poet pronounced his curses upon a civilization which identified men and women with the owls and the bats, and made it impossible to feel any sensation without the aid of ethyl alcohol. Roger had a new play he wanted to write, and he wanted a new environment to write it in; he recalled the picturesque things he had read about villas tucked away in the vine-clad hills of southern France, and one day he announced that he had purchased a steamer ticket.

So once more the light was going out from the Tarleton House; this time for good, because Roger couldn't afford to keep his room unused, and had to pack up his things and store them in the basement. Kip and Jerry went to the pier to see him off—and there Kip made the discovery that the slender brunette beauty whom he had watched upon the stage was traveling on the same steamer. That was how Jerry came to tell the story: he and Kip went home discussing the young couple and their "romance," which had started in the glare of the footlights and the nightlights of Broadway, and was now to be subjected to the strain of the "simple life" in a lonely villa of the French countryside.

XI

There was more than one vacant room in the Tarleton House; it was no easy task to keep a family hotel going through that crisis. In the days of the boom and the rise in prices, Kip and his mother had hated to go to their old guests and tell them that it would be necessary to raise the rates; but now these same guests seemed to have no hesitation in coming to Kip or his mother, and declaring that they found themselves unable to pay, and that unless their rates were reduced they would have to move to a cheaper place. Worse yet, some of the boarders would run up bills, and hang on, pleading hard times, and begging for mercy, the women weeping in their rooms, and asking where would they go, what would they do?

The rates had to be reduced, and also the standards of the establishment: a source of humiliation to Kip and his mother and aunt. To have to buy cheaper foods in the market, those with less flavor and distinction; to serve on their table, instead of prime ribs of

beef, a device called "pot roast," which was made by boiling tough beef, and then baking it in the oven; to follow this with stewed prunes, instead of "floating island," or the other delicacies which Aunt Sue knew how to prepare with an abundance of eggs and cream! What would become of one's talk about the superiority of Southern cooking, and of all the gastronomic conversation which went on at the dinner-tables? Those boarders who were able to pay the old rates resented the change of standards; so, strangely enough, did those who weren't able to pay the old rates—and even those who weren't able to pay anything! No one scolded and fussed more than the bed-ridden Pow, who talked about fried chicken with mush, Maryland style, and had to eat a piece of old boiled hen, served with a lump of dough called a "dumpling"!

Room after room became empty, and it became necessary to let some of the servants go—thus adding to the unemployment crisis. Kip and his mother and his aunt had to do part of the work which the servants had done; and so they parted with more of their dignity. Such a mass of misery, of petty cares harassing human beings; and no one knowing what caused it, all of them with a sense of bewilderment, as if some evil spell had been put upon the world! The newspapers, upon which they relied for their daily store of ideas, had no help to give. The editors had but two things to say, over and over, day after day: first, there wasn't anything the matter; and second, whatever it was, it would soon get better.

The only comfort was, that everybody you knew was in the same fix. In letters from Maggie May came a picture of what had happened to the sugar-planters. Lee had borrowed large sums from the bank, and financed a crop; he had been attentive and competent, and had raised a huge lot of cane—and now he was offered for it a price which would not cover his notes at the bank. Worse yet, he and his uncles had bought more land at boom prices, and now it wasn't worth the amount of the mortgage, and they would have been glad to let it go at that price—only the seller of the land wouldn't take it back, but would sue them on their notes and take some of their other land!

It didn't seem to make any difference what you did; whether you gambled "on margin" like Roger and Jerry, or whether you worked soberly and productively like Lee and Kip—the devil of "hard times" got you just the same. Kip didn't know what was wrong, and had no idea how to find out, and there was only one gleam of comfort he could find in the whole thing—the fact that

as the Chilcotes became less wealthy, they became less remote from him! He was ashamed of the idea, which seemed like treachery; but he couldn't keep the sneaking thought out of his mind, that if Maggie May and her mother would lose all of their land and income, they might stop at the Tarleton House on their next visit to the metropolis, and it might even become possible for the clerk of the establishment to aspire to the role of suitor!

XII

"You know the doctor said it wouldn't do me any harm to have a bracer now and then! You know it's not the same with me as with you—I've been used to it all my life. For God's sake, Kip, have a little sense!"

Thus Pow, pleading for mercy, in his chained and prisoned state. He would start an argument almost every day, and Kip would go on attending to whatever had to be done, cold and pitiless. "You know I have no liquor, father, and no way to get any. Do you expect me to break the law for you?"

"At least you might stop driving my friends away. If they're willing to give me a nip——"

"I haven't driven anybody away, and I haven't interfered with what they want to do."

"You know Gwathmey hasn't been near me for a week!"

"You'll have to settle that with Gwathmey. I haven't said a word to him."

"It's a lie! It's a lie!" The Big Chief raised himself on his one good elbow, and shouted—it was really not much more than a whisper, seeming to be stifled under the black mustaches. But it had the intensity of a shout, and was rather ghastly to listen to. "You've got me helpless here, and you torture me, and laugh at me behind my back!"

"You know what the doctor said, father. If you get excited, you may bring on another stroke."

"I may just as well die and be done with it. What have I got to live for? You wowsers have made my whole life a torment; you are killing me with your damned puritanical notions."

Kip went on straightening up the room. It did no harm to let Pow grumble and storm, one could learn not to hear it. Kip went out of the room, carrying a tray of soiled dishes; and when he returned, the old man was lying back upon his pillow, motionless,

with his jaw hanging down. He had had another stroke—and this time it had taken both sides of him.

Having known that it might come at any moment, Kip was not too greatly shocked; and yet, it was his father, and one's father dies but once. The features were still set in discontent—that torment of body-cells which have been poisoned by narcotics, until they are no longer able to function normally. Kip found himself suddenly weak in the knees, and had to take a chair by the bedside. He sat for a while, with the puzzled frown across his forehead. He thought about that dream which he had cherished, almost to the end, that when the new law went into effect, Pow might come once more to be a father he could respect; he compared that dream with his father's last cry of fury—"You are killing me with your damned puritanical notions!" The Big Chief's parting message to his son—and the message of all drinkers to all sober men! It was coming to be the message of drinking America on the subject of the prohibition laws. All the evils of the country were caused by the fact that sober men were interfering with the right of drinkers to get drunk and to stay drunk!

CHAPTER NINE · · · THE NEW MAN

I

ROGER CHILCOTE'S play was reopened in October, and Lilian Ashton came back to take up her role. But Roger did not come with her, because he was half way through the writing of a new play, and was going to move down to the Riviera for the winter. As in the case of "Anita," art took precedence over affection, and the poet who wrote about leaving all for love, in reality left love for writing.

The experiment of the simple life in a villa of the French countryside had not proved successful. There had been a good deal of rain and mud, and the plumbing had been unsatisfactory, and also the domestic service. Roger writing a play was not at all the charming creature of literary teas and cabarets; he was solitary, moody, and open to the charge of selfishness. He had no consideration for his companion in exile, no sense of responsibility as to how an ambitious young actress, the darling of Broadway, was to manage to pass her time. When she wanted him to go visiting in the villas of rich Americans, he said they were a horde of Hottentots, and for her to go alone. He was not to be tempted even by opportunities to meet the élite of the French aristocracy, the most haughty and aloof of mortals; he said their women were frumps and their men were subnormal.

There was a fundamental difference between Roger and his darling of Broadway. She had been born and raised in Ashtabula, Ohio, and was ashamed of the fact, and wanted to elevate herself; whereas Roger had been born at the apex of the social pyramid, and looked with quiet disdain upon considerations of worldly place. If there was anybody he wanted to meet in France, it was half a dozen long-haired and hollow-cheeked poets in the cafes of Montmartre. He explained his point of view to Lilian with insufficient consideration for her feelings. He told her that she was in her ideas a perfect little bourgeoise, and she brooded over that in the tiresome hours while the poet was shut up in his study. When he

emerged, she had it figured out; so long as she was enacting his Anita, enlarging his personality and enhancing his glory, he was interested in her; but the moment she presumed to be herself, he made her a target for insults.

Jerry, telling Kip about all this, showed how much better he and his girl worked it. Eleanor Follet and he were living in the same world and preying upon the same celebrities—she writing "ad copy" about their books and plays, while he gave them publicity in the "Gothamite." The two jobs fitted together, and the jobbers would scheme to get "openings" and introductions, each for the other. But never would they dream of going off into a hole by themselves, away from their world and its excitement. When they went for a week-end to the country, they found themselves spending Sunday afternoon figuring the best way to get back to town.

Roger sent the first act of his play, "The New Man," and Jerry and Kip read and discussed it; or rather Jerry discussed, and Kip listened, as usual. It was another story of a "triangle"; but this time the scene was in Manhattan, and the people were the wealthy sophisticates with whom Roger had been associating. Jerry said the play was all right, but it wouldn't make a sensation like "The Golden Jail," for the reason that so many plays were written on this subject; all the playwrights were living the same life. Kip asked why Roger, who had been to so many places, and seen so much, should have chosen such a locale. Jerry said it was new to Roger; it was new to each playwright in turn. It was the easiest thing to write about, and in the long run the safest. There was no use expecting Roger Chilcote, who had had money all his life, to be content with an empty purse.

So here was this haughty genius writing for the market, and making no bones about it! Gone were the fine phrases about art, and the rights of young love; Roger was dealing with gilded adultery, because that was the way to please the audiences of gilded adulterers. Kip, in turn, must hold his tongue, because he got his living from a family hotel, of which Roger might again become a patron, and in which Jerry was now the star boarder and literary light!

II

Roger came back about Christmas time, but did not patronize the Tarleton House; he explained that he had to be nearer the theatrical district, and the haunts of his fashionable friends. The truth was,

as Kip found out, he and Lilian had got lonesome for each other, and were setting up housekeeping in an apartment hotel, which was honored by having a leading playwright and a leading lady, without requiring them to exhibit a marriage license. Roger's books and other belongings were transported to his new home, and for a while Kip got news of him from Jerry, or from the papers.

"The Golden Jail" had finished its run, and was about to be put on the road; another actress was to take the part, while the exquisite Lilian was to star in "The New Man." The season was dull, on account of hard times, but even so, Roger got an advance, and his purse was full again, and the night life as lively as ever. The new play went into rehearsal, and Kip visited another vacant loft, and watched the rehearsal of a dinner-party in a Park Avenue apartment, which made him think all the time of that function to which Roger had taken him—the one at which the playwright had discoursed so learnedly upon the serving of wines and liqueurs. Kip even thought he recognized the hostess in one of the characters, and wondered if the lady would recognize herself, and if so, what would she think. Of course, a playwright had to use the things he saw; maybe that was why he went to fashionable dinner-parties—and maybe that was why he was invited!

In due course there was another tryout, this time in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Kip read about it in the papers, and received a postcard from Jerry. Two weeks later came the New York opening, and the Tarleton family received their orchestra seats—only three this time, alas; poor Pow would never again be heard to boast of his intimacy with a successful playwright. Kip saw "smart" life as it is lived in the pent-houses, where Gerald Cameron, the suave and polished husband, keeps a watch upon his unfaithful partner, not because he wants to strangle her, nor even to divorce her, but because he wants the affair to be handled in a dignified way. It was a sort of companion-piece to "The Golden Jail," showing how much better we manage matters in these modern days, and the audience got the idea and chuckled merrily—nobody more so than the pent-house hostess whom Kip recognized, and who recognized herself as the heroine of this ultra-modern adventure. The critics were cordial next morning, but they couldn't keep from intimating that "The New Man" was lacking in the intensity and splendor of "The Golden Jail," and for Roger Chilcote it must be taken as an interlude.

III

After that Kip did not see his famous friend for a couple of months, but had to get his news from Jerry, as in the old days. When finally they met again, the circumstances were painful; Roger was not able to walk straight, nor to talk straight, and was in evening clothes at three o'clock in the afternoon, having obviously been out all morning. He came to the Tarleton House in a taxicab, looking for Jerry, and Kip had to pay the fare because Roger's pockets had been picked. Jerry, of course, was not at home, so Kip took charge, and got the poet upstairs to Jerry's room, and into Jerry's bed. On the way and during the process he heard a detailed story of Roger's troubles. "In vino veritas," the ancients noted—with the implication that the "veritas" will be of an unpleasant character.

The poet had had a second "bust-up" with his lady-love. He accused her of being too much interested in a young millionaire whom she had met on the steamer from France; while she in turn accused him of being too much interested in half the Park Avenue hostesses who were interested in him. She refused to heed the obvious fact that a playwright has to have local color. "What the hell'm I goin' write about?" demanded Roger, tripping over his tongue in his efforts to explain the complicated task of recording Park Avenue hostesses for posterity. Anyhow, neither Roger nor Lilian were behaving in modern fashion; Roger made note of that—even while he was tripping over his own tongue, and over his own feet. He stopped on the stairs, and put his hand on Kip's shoulder, and said: "By God, I ain't so much like Gerald Cameron, am I, kid? Never do act like my heroes, do I?"

Said Kip: "I've often wondered why you don't write about people as they really are."

"By God, that's a hot one!" chuckled the poet, and sat right down on the stairway of the Tarleton House, to settle this problem in literary ethics. "I'll tell you the God's own truth, kid, I'm such a rotter that if I put myself into a play, they'd hiss me out of the theatre." Whereupon Roger turned for a while into a "weeping drunk," and told Kip the worst about his faults and failings.

Kip was used to all kinds of drunks, and an expert in handling them. He got Roger to the room, and rang for Taylor Tibbs, no less an expert. They got the poet undressed and into Jerry's bed; and Roger was grateful as always, but embarrassed because his

purse was gone, and he had no tip for the Negro. Both Taylor and Kip insisted that it would be all right to pay him later, but Roger wouldn't hear to that—no, by God, in the morning he'd be sober, and stingy, and he must write a check for this bob-tailed monkey before he went to sleep. So Kip had to get a blank check from Jerry's desk, and a pen, and stand by while the check was written with uncertain fingers. Roger wanted to make it a hundred dollars, because Taylor Tibbs was helping to save many dramatic masterpieces for posterity; but Kip insisted that ten dollars was all the service was worth, and Taylor backed him up—understanding that he would really get the ten, but never the hundred!

IV

It happened that Jerry spent that night in Eleanor's apartment, so it was Kip who had to get up in the middle of the night and make hot coffee and administer bromo seltzer, and rout out Taylor and send him for Hunyadi water; also it was Kip who sat by Roger's bedside for a couple of hours and heard about the insides of a poet's soul.

All these years Roger had teased Kip, saying every clever thing he could think of. But in his heart he respected the younger man's steadfastness, and paid him the tribute of not telling him too much. But now, in the hours of "katzenjammer," Roger talked; he gave his frank opinion of the life he was leading—which opinion was that it was a rotten life, and that he was a fraud and a swindler, a parasite upon parasites. He stated what he thought of the fashionable crowd for whom he catered, and it was that they were a lot of pimps, prostitutes and perverts; they stood upon the cultural level of racing touts and their harlots. "I'll tell you the God's own truth," said the celebrated poet, between wrenches of nausea. "If I had to live the life of this New York crowd, I'd rather be raised in a Methodist Sunday school and turn into a shouting evangelist." These were, of course, the worst things that Roger's imagination could conceive, and the confession was the most extreme that a New York sophisticate could make.

Of course, Kip mustn't say, "I told you so." He mustn't say, "I've done everything I could to keep you from drinking." He must be tactful, and affectionate, and above all hopeful—since leading playwrights have been known to shoot their heads off or chew cyanide of potassium in crises such as these. Said he: "You don't

have to live this life, Roger. You can break loose, and write about other kinds of people."

"No, I can't, because I'm a coward; I haven't got the guts to stand unpopularity. I have to please the critics, and be the life of the literary party."

"You only think that's true, Roger. You've got something better in you."

"I know, you've got to save my soul, God bless you. But as soon as I get over this headache I'll be laughing at you again. Don't waste your time on me, Kip, I'm bound for the garbage-can. I'll even go back to that little slut that drove me to this."

So then the playwright told what he really thought about that delicate brunette beauty who had embodied his two heroines to half a million theatre-goers. She drew the soul out of him with her kisses, but all the same, she was a little slut, and her mentality was that of a street-rat. She learned manners and charm like a she-monkey, and literature like a she-parrot. The one thing she really understood was to climb in the world, and shine in the newspapers; her final ambition was to transfer herself from the theatrical columns to the society columns, where real ladies were reported. Roger had kept hoping against hope that he might teach her something, but it couldn't be done, because it was an offense to point out to her the nature of the tinsel and paste she treasured. Either she would sulk, or she would fly into a rage and reveal the street-rat.

Kip got his friend to sleep again, and in the morning he telephoned Jerry, who came over and helped at the job of nursing and cheering up. Incidentally, for the first time in his life, Kip spoke his mind to the self-satisfied and successful editor. Through the years of their acquaintance, the editor had encouraged Roger's cynical side, and helped to pour ridicule on Kip, "the little moral demon." "That's all very well for you, Jerry," said Kip. "You're hard-boiled, and you think about yourself, and take care of yourself, and don't go to extremes. But Roger's a genius, and he's big-hearted and gives everything he's got."

"Thanks for your frankness," said Jerry, dryly.

"That's all right, you know that what I'm saying is true. Roger is different from you, and needs your help. He was your friend long before he was mine, and he'd never have been in this mess if you'd done your duty by him."

Jerry gathered his dark eyebrows into a forbidding frown, a part of his worldly stock in trade. But in his heart he knew

that Kip was speaking the truth, and in the end he decided to "take it." Of course, he wouldn't say that he wanted to be raised in a Methodist Sunday school and turn into a shouting evangelist; but he said that the time had come to pull Roger loose from this smart crowd which wasn't worthy to shine his shoes, and that he, Jerry, would help boost him onto the water-wagon for a while.

V

So was brought to a head the conflict which had been going on in the insides of Kip for more than a year: that duel between fiend and conscience, first revealed in the soul of Shakespeare's Launcelot. " 'Budge,' says the fiend. 'Budge not,' says my conscience. 'Conscience,' say I, 'you counsel well'; 'Fiend,' say I, 'you counsel well.' " Should Kip, or should he not, write to Maggie May and give her some hint as to what was happening to her brother? Was he, or was he not, deceiving himself, pretending that he was doing for his friend's sake something which might be so greatly to his own advantage?

Kip sent to Maggie May a letter which had been written and revised and torn up and written again several times. In its final version it did not go into particulars about the night life of Manhattan, and the tendency of successful dramatists to fall in love with their leading ladies. No, it could not bring itself to hint at things so remote from the standards of young ladyhood in the "Teche country." It was a missive reserved but solemn in tone, and perhaps more alarming for what it failed to say. It informed Miss Maggie May that New York was a city of many temptations, and that men of genius were emotional, and Roger in particular was too generous; now he needed help, and there was no one who could give it quite so well as his sister.

At least, that was how it seemed to Kip, and he hoped that Miss Maggie May would excuse him for his boldness; also he hoped that she would never tell Roger what he had done, because Roger resented interference with his affairs, and if the visit were to do any good, Miss Maggie May would have to think up some reasons of her own for coming. The letter added, very humbly, that of course Kip would be glad to see her again, and to do anything he could to make things easy for her—no, that last was one of the sentences that was rewritten half a dozen times, and finally cut out entirely,

because of the possibility that it might sound like the shadow of a hint that the Tarleton House had vacant rooms!

Maggie May answered promptly. She understood the meaning of Kip's warnings, and thanked him for his kindness. It was very sad; but perhaps the trouble was hereditary, and they should not blame poor Roger too severely. She would come, and do the best she could. Her cousin, Mrs. Fessenden, had invited her several times to pay a visit, and that would be the easiest way to arrange matters. Maggie May was writing to Mrs. Fessenden at once, and would let Kip know of the arrangements. Certainly she would never mention to anyone but her mother Kip's part in the matter; she thanked him again, and looked forward with pleasure to seeing him.

She wrote again in a week or so. She was coming to New York in a few days. Kip was in a fine glow of excitement, with many problems to occupy his mind. Should he go to the train to meet Maggie May? Or would her relatives, those rich and important persons, think he was "butting in?" And what would Roger do about Lilian Ashton? Roger had never told his people that he had quit the Tarleton House: his mail from home still came there. How would he explain to his sister the address in the apartment hotel? And what excuse would he give for never inviting her there?

Kip put the problem up to Jerry, who laughed and said that sooner or later Maggie May was going to have to wake up to the realities of the world about her—and probably it would be sooner. Sisters weren't such dubs nowadays. But Kip insisted that Maggie May was different from any and all other girls. Jerry said, how old was she—must be twenty now. Kip said twenty-one, and Jerry smiled. "You keep track of her birthdays, do you? What you better do, kid, is get busy this trip, and not let her wither into an old maid."

Of course Roger himself did not fail to think of this problem of Lilian Ashton. It was presently made known that he was more tired of her than ever, and had decided to go out and stay with the Fessendens for a while. He would occupy that cottage which his cousin had offered him, and spend his time thinking out a new play. It was springtime, and the country would be pleasant, and he would take long walks, and renew old times with his sister. Kip had a thrill over this; how delightful to a born reformer to play the role of guardian angel, and guide men's destinies without their having the least idea of it!

VI

The afternoon came, and Kip was invited by Roger to join in the welcome. He put on his best suit of clothes, which Taylor Tibbs had brought back from the cleaner's, and from which his mother and aunt picked the last scrap of lint. He had a new Fedora hat and a pair of gloves to match, his mother having accompanied him to the department store. Now, exactly right, and very much fussed up and elated, he met Roger at the Pennsylvania station, and Roger, by some magic known to celebrities, obtained permission to go down to the tracks where the train came in. There was Maggie May descending from a car, in a blue silk dress, and a little straw hat for springtime, with a bunch of blue-bells on it—Kip saw everything in a flash, and would love blue-bells and blue dresses forever and forever after.

She was a grown young lady now, very sedate, yet happy, and so glad to see them. She came hurrying, and gave Roger a big hug; she went on hugging him, until the tears came into her eyes. She shook both of Kip's hands, and stood looking the two men over, first one and then the other. "Oh, Roger, you are pale and thin! You have been overworking!" It was the tact of a girl who was used to managing men. To say, "You have been dissipating!" would have been cruel; but "overworking" was dignified. To Kip she said: "You don't look a day older!"—and that was not so good, because Kip was tired of being the "kid," and having Jerry tell him he would never grow up till he cut loose from his mother's apron-strings. He was almost twenty-four now, but stood there as much rattled as a schoolboy.

Maggie May told them scraps of news from home, and what sort of a trip she had had, and how glad she was again, and the messages Lee had sent them, and how he had planted another crop, in spite of the fact that he didn't know if there would be any market. The red-caps had gathered up her bags, and they were in the elevator, on their way to the Fessenden auto. Roger's suitcases were already on the front seat, and Maggie May's were piled in. She asked, "Where are we going?" and Roger answered, "To Cousin Jenny's." Kip started to say good-bye; but Maggie May said, "Oh, no, I want to have a chat with you. Can't we have tea somewhere?" So, of course, Kip was in the seventh heaven, where the lovely blue angels dwell, wearing blue-bells in their new spring hats.

Roger told the chauffeur to drive them over towards Fifth Ave-

nue, and they went into one of those fancy places conducted by Betty Marie, or perhaps by the Countess Galupsky, who was the Tsar's first cousin, and had her toes frostbitten while fleeing to Archangel from the Bolsheviks; you feel you are in Holy Russia, because there are shining brass samovars, and the sandwiches have red caviare in them, and the serving maids all wear droshkys—or is it kulaks? Anyhow, there are little tables where young men and women can sit and look at each other by the light of pink lampshades, and say over and over again how glad they are, and exchange the news about their relatives and friends, and who is engaged to whom, and how Sister Lelia's new baby is doing, and about Mama's neuralgia, and what the hard times have done to the sugar-planters, and "Oh, Roger, I'm just dying to see the new play!"

Said Roger: "I'm not at all proud of it. It's one of these smart things, that you have to write to please the idle rich."

"Oh, but Roger, Cousin Jenny wrote that everybody was talking about it!"

"Just a measure of the emptiness in their heads," said Roger.

Maggie May looked at Kip, with a frown on her face. "What's happened to him, Mr. Tarleton? I never knew him to be humble before."

Said Kip: "It's the hard times, Miss Maggie May. These people in New York thought the world belonged to them, but now they've had to go to work for a few months."

VII

Maggie May would now take up with her brother the job she had performed for so many years with her father. She would become the driver of a water-wagon, the conductor, guide, and functionary who speaks through a megaphone and keeps the passengers entertained; she would be the bumpers, front and rear, the shock-absorbers, the cushioned springs—everything about a water-wagon which may conduce to the comfort of a passenger and tempt him to stay on board.

It was going to be a harder job this time. Maggie May couldn't do it by playing seven-up, for Roger declared that card-games had been contrived by and for morons. She couldn't do it by calling in "company," for Roger declared that "company" drove him to drink. She couldn't read to him, because his idea of reading was to seize a book and skim through page after page, and after a score

of pages, throw it down with a cry of "Tripe!" or "Slush!" or "Swill!" The reason Roger wrote books—so he declared—was because most other people's stuff was so "lousy."

No, the only thing Maggie May could do for Roger was to listen to him. She must learn to understand his strange prejudices, and the set of code words he used: why it was so dreadful to be a "Philistine," and what it meant to be "bourgeois"—not overlooking the fact that if you were a woman you were "bourgeoise," while if it was a group, it was the "bourgeoisie." Prominent among the members of this despised class was the "epicier," or "grocer," a term applied to writers who sold their stuff to the ordinary magazines. Sometimes Roger shifted from French to German, and called the stuff "Kitsch," and the writers "Hottentots." Such terms of scorn had special meaning, and the only sure way to avoid having them applied to yourself was to learn to apply them to others.

VIII

Maggie May needed help at this job; and the person she looked to was Kip. He had timidly suggested that when she was in the city, she might let him take her to lunch; so in a few days he heard her voice over the telephone—she was coming in to a matinee, and would he meet her at the Countess Galupsky's at a quarter past five? Needless to say, he would, and he did.

She came alone; when they had got seated, and had given their order to one of the members of the Russian aristocracy, Maggie May fixed her gentle and observant brown eyes on Kip, and said: "I have just been to see 'The New Man.'"

"Oh!" said Kip, his conversational powers failing him.

"I didn't tell Roger I was going," added the girl. "In fact, I didn't tell anybody. I just bought a ticket and went in."

"A strange play," he ventured.

"I feel as if I had just waked up from a dream. I can't realize that my brother has written such a play; or that there are people who go to see it, and laugh at it—enough to fill a whole theatre, day after day."

"I don't think Roger wanted you to see it, Miss Maggie May."

"I have to understand him, Mr. Tarleton; the world he lives in, and the people he meets. It's no use for me to stay in the Teche country, nor to bring the Teche country up here. I want you to give me some advice."

"I'll do the best I can, certainly."

"Well, the first thing I have to know about is that Miss Ashton."

A sudden feeling of warmth began to take rise in Kip; starting apparently at the heart, and spreading upwards through the neck, the cheeks, the forehead with the queer horizontal wrinkles of perplexity. "Yes, Miss Maggie May," he said, weakly.

"I want to know what sort of person she is; and I want to know about her relations with my brother."

"Yes, Miss Maggie May"—still more weakly.

"Of course, I'm not supposed to know anything about it. But it seems there are people concerned to keep you informed about unpleasant things. Somebody took the trouble to cut little pieces from the papers and mail them to me. They did the same for Mama, and each of us kept the secret from the other for quite a while."

Kip was thinking, as quickly as his wits could work. He knew that Maggie May was doing something which, according to her code, was revolutionary; he knew that it was taking a lot of moral effort, and it was his duty to meet her half-way. But there was that accursed hot flush stealing all over his face! Presently she would notice it, and she too would begin to grow red. She was forcing herself to look straight into his eyes, the big, earnest blue-grey eyes which she trusted; she was keeping her voice casual and matter-of-fact, and he must manage to do the same—just as if it were the custom for young ladies of the best breeding to invite their men friends to an afternoon cup of tea and discuss their brothers' mistresses!

"Is it really true, Mr. Tarleton, that she and Roger are living together?"

"Yes, it is true."

"For how long a time?"

"Ever since the play started, I'm told."

"They were in France together?"

"Yes"—and somewhere in the deeps of Kip the voice of Jerry Tyler was saying: "You see, I was right! The girls are different nowadays!"

"Tell me what sort of person she is, Mr. Tarleton."

"Well, you saw her on the stage—"

"She's attractive in many ways, and seems quite refined. I would think she was a lady if I met her. But the part she was playing was so strange to me, I couldn't separate her from it, and so I'm in confusion. You have met her?"

"A number of times."

"What do you think of her?"

"Well, she's always been pleasant to me, and I like people if I can."

"How does she get along with Roger?"

"At first they did very well, but in France they quarreled some, and now they quarrel a lot."

"Please tell me about it."

He hesitated. "It's not easy, Miss Maggie May."

"But I have to know, or I'm helpless. Has Roger talked to you about her?"

"Once he did."

"And can't you tell me about it?"

"Well, you see, it was when he had been drinking."

"You must really help me, Mr. Tarleton! It's no use trying to get along according to home standards up here. I've got to meet Roger's friends, and learn to talk like them." ("God forbid, Miss Maggie May!" Kip found himself about to say; but he kept a bridle on his tongue.)

IX

The sister went on with her cross-examination, like a district attorney, and little by little she got the painful story of the rows between Roger and Lilian—all but some of the offensive names which the playwright had applied to his flame. Kip felt the need of pointing out the mitigating circumstances—that Lilian and Roger both worked very hard, overworked, in fact, and were frequently under a heavy strain. Also, one had to remember the world they lived in, its different customs and points of view. "People do what they please up here, Miss Maggie May."

"Yes," said she, "and I don't blame them for that. I blame them for what they please."

She gave Kip a moment or two to digest this, and then went on: "I've had a lot of time to think over this problem. I know Roger doesn't believe in any religion, so I wouldn't blame him because he didn't consider it necessary to say marriage vows before a clergyman. What I can't understand is, how he can live with a woman he doesn't really love and respect."

"Well, I've no doubt he thought he did, in the beginning, Miss Maggie May."

"I suppose the trouble is, he didn't take long enough to make up his mind." Again there was a pause. "I have this problem to decide: I mustn't seem too straight-laced, or I'll just irritate Roger; on the other hand, if I make too many concessions, I'll lose my self-respect, and maybe his. What I wanted to find out is, whether I ought to try to separate him from that woman, or whether I ought to meet her, and be friendly to her, and try to get her to help me."

"She'd be suspicious of you, Miss Maggie May. Roger hasn't spared her the bitter knowledge that he thinks her his social inferior."

"I don't want to be a snob," said the girl. "I don't look down on her in my heart because she earns her living. On the other hand, I can't pretend that I like the way she earns it."

"That would seem very snobbish to her," replied Kip, with a smile. "She thinks it's a good way. And besides, when you have to earn your living really, you can't afford to be so particular. I can speak for those who have been poor; I know how uncomfortable it can be."

So Maggie May became humble towards a Broadway theatrical star, and asked all sorts of questions about her life and work. She even asked the embarrassing question, whether Roger was the first man Lilian had loved. Kip answered that he was pretty sure he wasn't . That would make it seem less cruel to separate them, added Maggie May. Thus they sat, plotting Roger's future, and Kip couldn't help smiling again. How furious Roger would be if he could hear them! Or would he burst into laughter, and tell them to go ahead and do their damnedest?

"One thing is certain, Miss Maggie May. They aren't suited to each other, and Lilian's life isn't the right one for Roger. She drinks, and keeps him with a drinking crowd, and that's the thing that really counts."

"Yes, I suppose nothing else would matter so much, if people didn't drink. It's the same way out at Cousin Jenny's; they don't get drunk there, but they serve liquor all the time, and it's forever under Roger's nose. It seems to be the same wherever you go."

"I hoped it was going to be better when we had prohibition," sighed Kip.

"So did I; but it hasn't seemed to make any difference at all—at least not with people of our sort. Mr. Fessenden has a big stock in his cellar, and he's bitter against prohibition, and makes it a point of honor to go on exactly the same as before."

"Well, I suppose his stock will be used up some day, and then we'll see."

They talked prohibition for a while—like everybody else in the tea-room. The new law was in its second year now, and there was a new president to enforce it; a Republican president, that former senator named Harding, who had been selected by the "wets" to put a kink into the war prohibition measure, three or four years back. But neither Kip nor Maggie May remembered the record of this senator from Ohio. All they knew was that he was a fine-looking man, who made noble speeches to the effect that it was the duty of every good citizen to obey the law. He had appointed as attorney-general, the official charged with prosecuting law-violations, a friend of his from Ohio, a certain Mr. Daugherty; and this gentleman also made speeches, saying that the law must be obeyed, and that those who broke it would be sternly dealt with. So Kip and Maggie May felt hopeful, and waited for signs of the drying up of those floods which flowed in the tea-rooms and cabarets and private homes of the Island of Manhattan—wherever the well-to-do gathered to display their well-to-do-ness.

"If only Roger couldn't get anything to drink!" sighed Maggie May. "Then all our troubles would be over!" It was exactly what Kip had been sighing over his father, for the twenty-three years of his life, less three or four before he had known what was the matter. There must have been a half million children in that Island of Manhattan who had said it all their lives—or would have said it if they had known what was the matter.

X

The discussions of prohibition on the Island of Manhattan had never been hotter than they were at this time. There was an organization calling itself the "American Liberties League," which had set out to organize a mass demonstration against the law. It laid plans for a gigantic parade up Fifth Avenue, to take place on the Fourth of July; with the help of much publicity from the newspapers, it obtained, or said it had obtained, the signatures of 202,670 men and women who promised to march. His Honor, the Mayor, and numerous city officials agreed to review the demonstration, which was to be an "early morning till late night" affair.

As it happened, there had been, in the course of a couple of years, many violations of "American liberties," which the editors of New

York newspapers had known all about. Only a fortnight before the prohibition amendment went into effect, agents of the Department of Justice had carried out a series of raids in a hundred cities and towns of America, upon those working-class leaders who ventured to protest against a private war which President Wilson was carrying on against the people of Russia, using the money and arms and lives of the American people without warrant of Congress. Some thousands of men, women, and children had been herded into jails, under shocking conditions of crowding and deprivation; they were held for months without warrant or trial, and nine-tenths of them were finally turned loose without compensation for their sufferings. The editors of the newspapers had known all about these events while they were happening, but no one of them had considered it necessary to turn out and march up Fifth Avenue in defence of "American liberties." If discontented workingmen had attempted such a march, they would have been charged by mounted officers, clubbed insensible, and flung into jail wholesale; but when it was a question of influential gentlemen defending the liquor traffic, from which the police had been accustomed to derive tens of millions of dollars income, the police would escort the marchers, and His Honor, the Mayor, would wave a beer-bottle at them.

This Wet Parade passed within a block of the Tarleton House, so of course Kip turned out to see it. It wasn't the enormous affair which had been promised; the Anti-Saloon League had a tabulating machine to check up on its enemies, and certified the number of marchers at 14,922, including everyone who walked or rode, even the bandsmen and the cops—and one New York publisher who, in the excess of his ardor, managed to walk past the reviewing stand four times in the two hours! The newspapers apologized for the small attendance, explaining that it had been hot, and that most of those who signed pledges had preferred to spend their holiday at the beaches. It was a coatless and not very handsome procession, with blue and white banners, proclaiming: "We Want Our Beer!" and "We Want Wine With Our Meals!" A group of veterans said their say to Congress: "You Care for Our Crippled Soldiers—Our Morals Will Care for Themselves!" A forty-foot sign, borne by a dozen men, declared an insurrection: "The Volstead Act Must Go! We Hold the Eighteenth Amendment to be Unconstitutional! If This Be Treason, Make the Most of It!" A waggish person who had doubtless been looking at the cartoons in the newspapers, had prepared a sign, reading: "Only a Mother Could Love a Prohi-

bitionist's Face." To him the prohibitionists shouted back: "Who loves a drinker's face?"

There was a literary delegation, and Kip saw his friend Jerry, tall, erect, and stern, carrying a copy of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," mounted on a pole. Another crusading editor carried a painting of the "Marriage of Cana"—the point being that on the latter occasion Jesus had turned water into wine, and on the former he had turned wine into his own blood. These protestants marched solemnly, as became religious crusaders, paying no attention to either cheers or hisses.

Kip could not help wondering what Jesus had to do with this booze parade. He knew positively that Jerry Tyler had no trace of belief in any Savior; in fact he had heard the clever editor advance two hypotheses—first, that Jesus had been insane, and second, that he had never existed. Kip felt sure that not one of the editors of the "Gothamite" paid heed to the ideas of a long-dead Jewish messiah in regulating his personal conduct; whether as to looking upon a woman to lust after her, or turning the other cheek to a man who struck him, or selling all his goods and giving to the poor, or taking no thought as to the amount of his next month's salary-check. But here suddenly these ultimate moderns discovered that the commercial exploitation of ethyl alcohol depended upon what Jesus had taught about it!

In the memory of Kip that bedraggled Wet Parade lived as a symbol of all the parades of drinkers he had been watching throughout his life: the parades of revellers staggering into the Tarleton House; the Saturday night parades from Sandkuhl's and from the "lobster-palaces"; the parades of bacchantes celebrating election victories; the parades of "intellectuals" romping down the ball-rooms of fashionable hotels; the parades of taxicabs bearing poets and playwrights home from pent-house dinner-parties! American life had been a Wet Parade, ever since the first hour that Kip had opened his eyes upon it!

XI

Maggie May brought from her cousin an invitation for Kip to spend a week-end at the estate on Long Island; and Kip was in something of a panic over it. He had never been to such a place, and was quite sure he couldn't be really wanted by the great lady of "Broadhaven." But his mother and aunt insisted that was all non-

sense; he was as good as anybody in the world, and if Mrs. Chilcote had been willing to invite him to her home, Mrs. Fessenden would understand that it was proper, and even expected, that she should invite him to hers. They helped Kip to pack his suit-case, and gave him detailed information as to the habits of the wealthy and fashionable. How ladies in moderate circumstances come to know about such things is a mystery, but they always do.

So on Saturday morning Kip took the train to a station far out on Long Island, and Maggie May met him in a shiny sportcar, and drove him to the Fessenden place. You turned off the highway into a gravelled drive, and went past a mile or so of fields and meadows, and then a pine forest; you came to a ridge, and through the trees you saw a two-story mansion of red brick, in the Georgian fashion. You made a sweep around it, and stopped at a porte-cochere on the far side, facing the ocean, with a view of a little harbor with a pier and several boats. A man came out and took Kip's bag, and he went into an entrance hall which was like a museum or such public institution. Kip's heart went down into his boots—not so much because of fear that he wouldn't know what to do here, but because he saw that the dream of his heart was hopeless. Never, never could it happen that Maggie May would come down to his social level!

When he went to his room—one of those bedrooms which had a Van Dyck hanging in it—he found that his flannel suit for the afternoon had been laid out on the bed. When he went again, his evening clothes were ready, with buttons and studs and sleevelinks all in place in his shirt. If there was anything he didn't know, Mrs. Fessenden's servants would teach him! They even had his knives and forks and spoons arranged in proper order beside his plate, so that he had only to take those which were nearest to him. In every way, life was made easy, and he had only to bow to the ladies, and shake hands with the gentlemen, and say, "I am pleased to meet you"—and then get them to talking about themselves, and show interest in what they said, and thus his social success would be assured. It was Maggie May's formula, which she had revealed to him in a moment of mischief. He tried it, and it was magic.

The luncheon was served in the dining-room, upon the table which had been plundered from a fifteenth century French abbey. At the head of this aged and much scarred board sat the hostess, looking older than when he met her last, Kip thought, and even sadder. She was a very kindly person, underneath the stately

manner which she wore as a sort of protective disguise. She had a son, about twelve years old, rather pale and fretful; there was a governess for this youngster—and Kip noticed that "Master Bobbie" always objected to whatever he was told to do, and made a fuss about it. There was another lady of uncertain age, apparently a sort of companion to Mrs. Fessenden, and another quite old lady, who, as Kip learned later, had once held this position, and was now a pensioner. There were a number of dependents living at Broadhaven; Maggie May explained that it was the penalty of having a great deal of money, plus a kind heart. The social status of these dependents was uncertain; they appeared at some meals and not at others, according to whether company was present, and how important the company was considered.

After the lunch, Maggie May took Kip for a walk over the place, and showed him the rose-gardens and greenhouses, and the aviary full of strange birds, and the stables with the saddle-horses and little Shetland ponies—there was no one to ride them any more, but they were kept for sentimental reasons, like the old ladies in the house. Maggie May explained that there were two older children, a boy and a girl, expected back from boarding-school. She showed him—from a safe distance—the cottage in the pine-trees where Roger was staying, and explained that Roger never came to lunch, and frequently not in the evening, if he was writing.

She took him down to the pier, and the boatman got out a little cat-boat. Maggie May knew all about boats—they were part of the life at home. She sailed about the little private harbor, protected by stone breakwaters, and showed him the light-houses, one on each side of the entrance, the lights being turned on and off from the shore. Mr. Fessenden had a yacht, and often came back and forth to New York in this, and when he was coming at night, he would telephone, and the lights would be turned on. Otherwise the harbor was dark, so that no one might use it. There were exciting stories about dope-smugglers in speed-boats, and recently a rum-runner had sneaked in one stormy night, all unobserved, and in the morning there were tiretracks of a big truck, and footprints of men in the sand of the beach.

XII

So they talked about prohibition—like everybody else on Long Island. Because the well-to-do would not give up their pleasure,

there had developed with great suddenness a surreptitious and nocturnal system, which caused the highways of Long Island to echo all night with the rumble of heavy trucks. Signal lights flashed and bonfires flared, and speed-boats came sneaking into coves and harbors, both on the ocean and on the sound. Outside, beyond the legal three-mile limit, lay vessels from Halifax, loaded with the well-known Canadian rye, and from Britain loaded with the well-known Irish and Scotch, and from Cuba and the Bahamas with that Bacardi rum which was indispensable to parties both on Macdougal street and Park Avenue. Whatever you had money to pay for, you could get in America. Said Maggie May, sadly, it would be some time yet before Roger could be compelled to behave.

They talked about Roger, and the basis upon which he was proceeding at present. He wasn't going to be strictly "on the wagon" —no, his pride did not permit that, it would make him too conspicuous, and he would be bored to death by comments upon it. He was going to show that he could drink "like a gentleman," and not "like a stock-broker at a whoopee party." Maggie May had seen so much drinking of "gentlemen" at home, that she did not find this formula consoling; it was pitiful, she said, the way drinking people devised programs and schedules for themselves, and forgot them as quickly as New Year's resolutions. Kip told sad stories about his own father, and Maggie did something she had never done hitherto—she talked about the elder Roger, and the many sorrowful years she had spent with him.

"You and I have had our lesson," she said. "It seems a dreadful thing, that fathers have to destroy themselves, in order to teach children how to live; and even then, some don't learn it!"

They tacked back and forth across the little bay. The bright blue waves slapped against the boat, and the sun made little rainbows in the spray; all over the place was dancing and sparkling, and in the blue sky the clouds were great white billows. Maggie May, dressed in a white outing-suit, sat holding the tiller with one firm brown hand, knowing exactly what to do at every puff of the breeze and tilt of the boat. Everything was lovely, everything young and gay; yet they couldn't be happy, they couldn't think of themselves, nor of the dancing world—they had to come back to the problem of a poet, shut in a brick cottage back there in the pine-trees, wrestling with a doom, like a demigod in a Greek tragedy.

"There's something fundamentally wrong in Roger's life," said Maggie May; "something he ought to deal with."

"He's too exacting," said Kip. "He expects too much of people!"

"I was talking with him last night. He's dissatisfied with the work he's doing. He says his life is passing, and he's a failure."

"But good heavens, Miss Maggie May, he's only twenty-six, and he's made himself a great name! He's written a book of poems and a play that all the critics called masterpieces!"

"Yes, but he says that's only a beginning; he expected to do so much better. The truth is, Mr. Tarleton, he's vexed because there was another play that had more success than his this season. He says New York is a 'nine-day-town,' and 'The Golden Jail' is forgotten already. He can't bear to be a back number."

"Do all writers have to wear themselves out trying to beat each other?" Kip would never cease to wonder about the ways of writers.

"Roger is fretting because he wants to write something great, and it doesn't come the way it used to. He's irritable, and blames every little thing. He goes off by himself, and then he frets because somebody is expecting him to dinner, or because somebody did expect him yesterday. And of course when he's trying to cut down on his drinking, he blames his difficulties on that. He says he always drank all he wanted when he was writing; nobody can stay on the water-wagon and have any real inspiration. Do you think that is true, Mr. Tarleton?"

And so they had yet another problem to solve!

XIII

Back at the house, they sat on the loggia, chatting with Mrs. Fessenden and a couple of her old ladies. Presently there arrived two house-guests, a young polo-player, sun-tanned and handsome, and his sister, a blonde beauty at the peaches and cream stage. The old ladies disappeared, and the young people talked about sports, until they all went upstairs to dress for dinner. When Kip came down again, he sat and read the evening paper until Maggie May appeared; then he got up to meet her, and his head went sort of light, and it was as if he had drunk the cocktail which the servant had offered him. He had never seen Maggie May in evening dress before, and it seemed that such loveliness ought not to be sprung on a man all at once. She wore a gown of pale blue—Kip didn't know the names for all these filmy things, nor for the perfumes that go with them. Her arms and shoulders and bosom—he

couldn't endure to look at them, so instead they went out and looked at the sunset, and inhaled the odors of honeysuckle, wafted to them on the dying breeze. There was a new moon in the sky, and a bright, still planet, and to Kip it was like something in a dream.

Across the lawn came Roger strolling. He was coming to dinner out of courtesy to his friend the hotel-clerk; Maggie May said it was a courtesy he had recently refused to a countess. Roger disposed his tall form in a lawn-chair, and they talked about the news from New York; among other things the announcement that Jerry Tyler, associate editor of the "Gothamite," was engaged to be married to the well-known "ad-writer," Eleanor Follet. "Why haven't I ever met her?" asked Maggie May, innocently; and Kip wondered, did this decision of Eleanor's have any connection with the possibility that, as a duly established young matron, she might someday be invited to spend the week-end at Broadhaven?

The old ladies were not at the dinner-table. Besides the polo-player and his lovely sister, there came another young couple of fashion, and an Italian singer from New York. This latter was thirty or so, the son of a noble family, who had sung in the Metropolitan Opera House, and more important yet, in the Ziegfeld Follies, and received as much as a thousand dollars a night for concert work. He had raven black hair, straight as an Indian's, and smooth as silk; he had the smile of a winsome angel, and muscles like a prize-fighter. He was so happy, he said, he was going to stay just as he was for a hundred years. "I like myself exactly this way," he declared, in elegant Oxford English. He sang everything from baritone to tenor, every language from Choctaw to Arabic, and every style from church canon to the Memphis blues.

In all his songs that evening, he wooed the gentle brown Maggie May with the angel smile. He sang love songs, and every word was directed to her; at least, so it seemed to Kip, who never took his eyes from the singer, and listened with fainting heart. Of course the Signor Diabolo would fall in love with Maggie May—who could fail to? And how could she fail to be fascinated by such a marvellous being? He had been brought there for that purpose; all sorts of men would be brought, who came under the classification of "eligible": young men of fashion, heirs of millions, carefully chosen by a Southern lady of the old school of match-makers; Roger's friends, the shining literary lights, the trained drawing-room "lions"; every sort of important person—and what chance would there be for a poor clerk of a family hotel, now sinking

rapidly from second class to third or fourth? No, Kip had only been invited as an act of charity; he could hear the discussion which must have taken place between Maggie May and her cousin. "Mama thinks a great deal of him, because he's been so helpful to Roger; he doesn't drink, Cousin Jenny, and so he's really a very good influence for my brother."

Thus, Kip, while Signor Diabolo told Maggie May that his heart opened at her voice. His own voice thundered to a mighty crescendo, then died to a melancholy whisper, and Kip thought: "It's all over! They'll be engaged before morning!" But presently he found himself alongside Maggie May, and she said: "He has an extraordinary range, don't you think?" Kip replied, quite truly, that he had never heard anything like it. In order that no one might suspect him of jealousy, he added: "He's a fascinating person." Said Maggie May: "Do you find him so? Somehow, I'm always afraid of these dark men. I imagine that if they lost their temper, they might do something dreadful to you." So after that, Kip enjoyed the party!

XIV

Roger was enjoying it also. The young lady of peaches and cream had had the tact to ask him about his theories of polyrhythmic verse forms; so there was a critical authority explaining Paul Fort—that while his structures were irregular, his metre was really quite orthodox. Roger became lighted up, as always happened when he was on his favorite subject; he was so absorbed that he let the footman with the brandy pass him by. He had had one cocktail before dinner, and three kinds of wine during it, and a small glass of liqueur with his coffee; but that wasn't much for a man of his capacity, and if he let the evening go without any more, he would be all right.

It was pathetic to watch him. So long as he was rapt in the ecstasy of poetry, his own or some other man's, all was well. But not even the most cultured could stand a whole evening of the modern French masters; presently the young society people were talking about the costume ball at the nearby country club—and there was Roger, bored and restless, struggling to keep his eyes off the bottle of "Three Star Brandy," which stood on a nearby serving-table, along with a supply of carbonated water and ginger ale. Kip knew all the signs of drinker's misery; every glance of the eyes, every straying of the restless fingers. He knew also the

behavior of the women of the family, those who shepherd the drinking men: the anxious watching, the hasty efforts to make conversation, the meaning glances at one another.

The footman came on his next round, and Roger watched him out of the corner of his eye. Roger clenched his hands and let him get by; but then the effort was too much for him, he got up casually, and strolled to another part of the room, putting himself where the man would have to pass him again. This time he took one of the little squat glasses from the silver tray. Then with what superb casualness he chatted with the peaches and cream lady, looking down from his lofty height upon the creamy shoulders, and the two little silken straps holding up the filmy dress! How entirely absorbed he was in a problem of esthetics, and how unaware he managed to be of the glass he was holding in his hand! Also, how careful not to let his eyes turn in the direction of his sister, or of Kip Tarleton, "the little moral demon!"

The whole tragedy of a poet's life was in that episode; all the pity and terror of the lost soul, the galley-slave chained to the oar of John Barleycorn! Chained, seeing his chains, and feeling them —but fooling himself by a hundred devices, a hundred elaborate schemes of liberation! Planning excursions, telling himself that he was travelling, telling others about it—yet all the time chained to the oar! Ashamed of himself, yet pretending to be proud, spurning all aid, and quarreling irritably with those who sought to bring him aid! Doomed to spend the rest of his days in torment, no less whether he was rebelling against his master, or serving him, and striving to enjoy the service!

A pitiful thing when this happened to an ordinary man, but how much more so when it happened to a man of intellect and genius! For then you had not merely personal sufferings, poisoned nerve-cells and a cirrhotic liver; then you had poisoned poetry and a cirrhotic soul! You had a whole society narcotized; you had drunkards' fiction, drunkards' drama, drunkards' art; you had drunkards' newspapers and editorial pages, drunkards' clubs and propaganda societies, drunkards' college presidents and statesmen—and two drunkards' political parties! In all the activities of these individuals and organizations, you observed the same phenomena of restlessness and irritability, baffled perversity and angry guilt—all symptoms of nerve-cells benumbed, of hepatic tissue indurated and contracted, and stained yellow with bile pigments in the duct terminations!

CHAPTER TEN · · · *BROADHAVEN*

I

THE marriage of Jerry Tyler had important consequences for the Tarleton family. Once more they lost their "star boarder"; for Jerry was going to stay permanently in Eleanor's apartment, where he wouldn't have to pay rent; marriage was a wonderful institution, declared the associate editor of the "Gothamite," in the mood of gay cynicism affected by that publication. This set Kip to considering the problem of the Tarleton House, what it meant to himself and his mother and his aunt. They worked hard from morning till night, and carried many burdens for other persons; at the end of the month, when they reckoned up, they had less than nothing, and had to pay board to themselves. This had been the case ever since the business slump; and apparently the slump was going to last quite a while.

What was the use of it, Kip wanted to know. Both the mother and aunt had small incomes, and they were "ahead," if they had the sense to quit in time. As for Kip, he could find some sort of job, and if he worked as hard at it as at being a hotel-clerk, he could certainly earn his keep. The lease of the three dwellings which composed the Tarleton House was soon to expire, and the landlord had not made himself agreeable; let him take the job of finding another tenant, said Kip. The "good will" of the establishment was nothing but a deceptive name in times like these; it meant the obligation to "carry" people, and acquire a lot of promissory notes which it would be unpleasant and perhaps impossible to collect. Why not sell the lease, or, if that could not be done, take what furniture they needed, sell the rest, and move into a little apartment?

These revolutionary suggestions at first threw the ladies into a panic. The Tarleton House had been home to them for sixteen years, a living and a shelter against the storms of life; they had learned to take its cares and troubles as part of the natural order. But Kip pointed out, they no longer had a child to raise, and no

longer had a "drinking man" to fear. Nevermore would Pow leave them stranded, unable to pay their board-bill. After sixteen years of working for other people, why not work for themselves?

Night after night they debated the pros and cons; they dug out their old account-books, and priced apartments, and reckoned expenses this way and that. Aunt Sue wanted to keep one of the houses, and reduce the scale of the establishment, and keep only the best of their boarders, and their cook, who had grown old in their service, and Taylor Tibbs, for whom they felt a moral responsibility. For such a small establishment, no clerk would be needed, and Kip could get an outside job. They argued this back and forth, through the hot summer months, when trade always got worse, and while the state of the "times" showed no improvement. There was a frightful famine in Russia, while the farmers of America were feeding their grain to the pigs, or saving it up to use for fuel in the winter. Only the very rich were sure of their incomes; the troubles of boarders continued to multiply. Even Mr. Marin, the importer of cheeses, whom they had thought of as the Rock of Gibraltar, made the mistake of putting money into foreign exchange; and now there were attempts at revolution in several countries, and foreign exchange was dropping, and Mr. Marin was forced to take one of the cheaper bed-rooms, a third floor rear.

At last Kip had his way; one evening at dinner, he made the announcement to the boarders—a regular little speech, telling how sorry they were, but it was impossible for the Tarleton House to continue in the face of so many difficulties. "Some of you will understand what I mean," said Kip, and there was satisfaction in saying this in the hearing of persons who had demanded reductions, and had been more productive of excuses than of cash. The establishment would close one week from date; to those who had been their faithful friends for so many years he expressed his regrets, and his hope that they would find comfortable quarters elsewhere, and would not fail to see one another now and then. Several of the old stand-bys made speeches in return, and it was quite a sentimental occasion; some ladies had tears in their eyes—and perhaps some wished they had been more prompt in paying what they owed.

II

One painful aspect of this decision, which had been entirely overlooked—what was to happen to the precious stock of "prewar

goods," which reposed in the clothes closets and under the beds of Mr. Gwathmey of Kentucky, Mr. Fortescue of South Carolina, and the other Southern gentlemen of the old school? They had laid in a supply which was to them a form of life insurance; they had assumed the permanence of the Tarleton House, as they would of a savings bank or trust company—and here they were betrayed! Kip and his mother and aunt, teetotalers all three of them, had failed to take thought about the matter, and were embarrassed when confronted with it: these old friends and stand-bys, faithful customers who had paid their bills regularly every Saturday night, would suddenly be forced into the position of criminals, liable to a thousand dollars fine, and a year in a Federal penitentiary!

Yes, such was the threat of that abominable Eighteenth Amendment, and the still more abominable Volstead act which supported it and gave it effect! The law forbade the "transportation" or "delivery" of alcoholic beverages; paying no attention to the fact that perfectly respectable old gentlemen from Kentucky and South Carolina, who had never broken a law in their lives—unless it was playing poker for money—might be suddenly turned out of their boarding-place, and thus compelled to "transport" and "deliver" their priceless stock of the water of life. Unless, perchance, they were willing to leave it in their clothes closets, or on the floor where their beds had been!

The more you thought about this problem, the more troubles you faced. From the moment these liquid treasures were carried onto the street, they would be outlawed, and the persons carrying them would be felons. Any servant might betray them, for a reward; any prohibition fanatic might do it, for the love of Carry Nation or Billy Sunday! The truck-driver might decide to deliver the precious cargo to himself, and if he did, the owners would have no redress. It was becoming a common thing to help yourself to alcoholic goods in transit—there were terrible stories about baggagemen on trains, applying stethoscopes to trunks in order to hear the gurgle! Or even supposing you found an honest carrier, he might himself be held up; that, too, was growing into an established industry, known as "hijacking"; you read in the newspapers about regular battles fought in the streets.

In a crisis such as this men realize their common humanity, and come together for mutual protection. Messrs. Gwathmey, Fortescue, Marin, and other cronies of the poker-table held a conference behind locked doors. Various plans of campaign were proposed,

and finally it was decided that Francisco X. Marin, Spanish importer of cheeses, should be appointed generalissimo in charge of field operations. He was the owner of a truck, and boss of a truckman accustomed to handling cheese-boxes, which, providentially, are of convenient size for the carrying of whisky-bottles. Arrangements were made, with the secrecy which is so important in military operations. "Surprise is ninety per cent of victory," said Generalissimo Marin—that sturdy and rosy, dependable if somewhat vulgar addict to fancy waistcoats and diamond stickpins.

So, on the last morning but one of the Tarleton House, there appeared before the establishment a truck loaded with empty cheese-boxes, with a commanding officer sitting alongside the driver. The carrying in of cheese-boxes began; and what passing policeman or Federal agent could make objection to that—especially when it was known that the Tarleton House proprietor was "right with the organization," having recently purchased two tickets for the O'Kelly Association annual ball? A supply of boxes was delivered to the third floor front in number 39, occupied by Braxton Bragg Gwathmey, and a supply to the second floor back in number 37, occupied by Beauregard Fortescue—and so on down the list. Each of these gentlemen was waiting, and each got down on hands and knees in his clothes closet or beside his bed, and fell to "transporting" bottles into cheese-boxes.

So presently there was the truckman, aided by Taylor Tibbs, carrying loaded boxes downstairs, followed by the anxious injunctions of elderly Southern gentlemen. "Be careful! Don't stumble!" The boxes were loaded into the truck—and what passing policeman or Federal agent could object to that? The vehicle set out, with Generalissimo Marin as a stern and vigilant bodyguard. Meanwhile, the Southern gentlemen distributed themselves by taxicab, each to his new home; and so in due course the contents of cheese-boxes were safely stowed in new clothes closets and under new beds, and there was no scandal in the papers next morning, nor did any gentleman from Kentucky or South Carolina have to spend his declining years in a Federal penitentiary.

III

When the last guest had taken his departure, how strange seemed the three houses in their silence! So many rooms, each eloquent of departed friends or enemies; each piece of furniture with its sepa-

rate story, now brought to a finis. The office, the parlor, the dining-room, the kitchen—Kip had spent practically his whole life here, and ghosts walked by day and night. Here was where the Big Chief had lived; in this room he had played poker, in that he had got drunk; here in back of the office he had been sobered up, and on this spot he had fallen, and in this bed he had lain until he died. Now the Jews who bought second-hand furniture were coming to inspect things, and the fact that one's father had died in a certain bed neither added to nor detracted from its value.

The family was staying on, in several downstairs rooms, with Taylor Tibbs as man of all work. Impossible to get rid of Taylor—he would stay even without salary. They couldn't imagine what they would do with him in a New York apartment, but meanwhile, here he was, having carried the last trunk downstairs, and collected his last tip, and shed his last tear over tippers. His race loves excitement, things happening, white folks in a stir; this past week had been as if Gabriel had blown his trumpet and the universe had retired from business.

Kip joined the army of the unemployed, and began scanning the advertising columns of newspapers. "State qualifications," "previous experience required"—and Kip had many qualifications and much experience. It must have been mildly amusing to advertisers to open a letter and read: "I shall be twenty-four years old next month, and have assisted in the management of a family hotel for the past seventeen years!" Also Kip went to make personal application, and let advertisers have the benefit of a practiced hotel-clerk's smile. But no matter how early you arrived, you found twenty people ahead of you, and twenty more lining up behind. It was "hard times" in the Island of Manhattan, and Kip realized with sinking heart that employees have troubles as well as employers.

At this juncture Maggie May came back from the Adirondacks, where she and Roger had been visiting friends. Kip met her in town and took her to lunch; she was sunburned, a picture of health, and full of stories about mountain-climbing, a form of recreation unknown in Louisiana. Kip, in return, told of the demise of the Tarleton House, and the unpleasantness of interviewing office-boys. "Oh, but I know the very thing!" exclaimed Maggie May. "My cousin mentioned that they had discharged their assistant superintendent. I'll ask her to give you the place."

"But I'm not competent for a thing like that!" exclaimed Kip.

"Don't admit it," said Maggie May, out of her vast experience. "You must be competent for anything!"

"Not to a friend," said Kip.

"I don't know much about the position, but I don't see why you couldn't learn. It has to do with managing employees, and seeing that they do their work, and keeping accounts and so on; it seems to me it's much the same sort of thing you did at the Tarleton House. There's a superintendent, and he'd tell you."

"Of course, I'd be very glad to try, Miss Maggie May."

"Cousin Jenny said the main trouble was, they couldn't find men who were honest. I could tell her you'd be that."

"Yes, I'd be that," admitted the modest young man.

Maggie May promised to speak to her cousin at once; and sure enough, next morning came a telephone call with a strong Scotch brogue, such a rolling of the r's that it made the receiver rattle. "This is McCallum, superintendent of Broadhaven; wull ye be comin' out to see me?" Kip said he would be, and he was.

IV

Alexander McCallum was a stumpy little native of a town which he called "Glesghy"; he had bright blue eyes, bristly hair of a reddish tinge, and a bristly temper. "Meester Tarleton?" he enquired, and then looked Kip over from top to toe, with the practiced eye of a hirer and firer. "Young man, the fust thing I want to know, are ye one of them that will be tackin' commeessions?"

"Commeessions?" repeated Kip: not meaning to correct the superintendent's Scotch, but really not understanding.

"When ye send a feller to buy a lawnmower or a bushel of worrms to feed to the birrds, he has to have a ten precent commeession from the merchant."

"Do you mean I am supposed to get that, or—"

"I mean that ye are *not* supposed to." The superintendent snapped the words out of Kip's mouth. "Ye'll have a salary to live on, and a house to live in, and yer vegetables and fruits, and no more."

"Very well, then," said the young man; "I'll do whatever I agree to do, you can count on that."

(In this matter of "commeessions," what Kip found was that McCallum didn't want anybody else to get them, because he reserved them for himself. When the assistant discovered this, he

agonized over it for weeks, and finally told Maggie May, who passed the word on to Mrs. Fessenden. She sent back the message that all rich men's employees took commissions; it was impossible to eradicate the practice, and the master of the place didn't want to be bothered to know about it. So that was that.)

The interview continued: "They tell me ye're supposed to have had something to do with a hotel. What did ye do?"

"I did a little bit of everything. It was only a small place, about fifty guests, and I ordered the supplies and collected the bills and kept the accounts and carried up ice water and kept everybody satisfied. Since my father died, and my mother wasn't very well, I tended to everything but the meals, and sometimes to those."

"Humph!" said McCallum. "Ye're a versateel lad! And what would ye be expectin'?"

"I don't know," said Kip. "I have never worked for wages. If you'll pay me what you paid the last man, I'll do my best to do his job."

"I paid him a hundred and twenty-five for the fust six months, and a hundred and fifty after that. There's a five-room cottage, with gas and electreecity, and there's the fruits and vegetables in season, and we might let ye have a bit of milk each day if ye keep up the production of the dairy."

"That's all right with me," said Kip. "I never had anything to do with a dairy, but if you'll tell me, I'll promise to remember."

"Ye'll have a lot of rememberin', my lad," said McCallum. "We have a dairy and a chicken-ranch, and a stud farm, and an orchard, and a vegetable-garden, and an aviary, and a garage, and a carpenter-shop, and a smithy, and a boat-business, and a port—a leetle bit of everything, and whatever it is we haven't got, we're liable to be havin' it tomorrow. Ye have the men's time to keep, and the payrolls to make out, and a lot of buyin' to do, and the bills to check, and a hundred things that ye never know till they happen, when somebody breaks something, or one of the young people wants to keep a pet panther or learn to run a flyin' machine. Ye'll have a car of yer own, and mind ye, 'tis fer business, and not fer tackin' out the gurrls."

"I understand."

"And one thing more ye have to understand: they tell me ye're a friend to some of the people up yonder"—the superintendent stuck his thumb in the direction of the mansion.

"Yes, in a way."

"Ye have been a guest there, I hear?"

"Only once," said Kip, apologetically.

"Weel, of course, that's yer private affair. If ye can stand that sort of life, I have nowt to do with yer off hours. But I have this to say about beesiness hours, ye'll be on the job and doin' yer worrk, and if ye don't, ye may go on to be a friend of the family, but ye'll not be employed by Alexander McCallum."

"Of course, I understand that."

"Meself, I'm no believer in the mixin' of society and beesiness, Meester Tarleton, and I said it to the mistress when she spoke about ye. Said I: 'If I have to be keepin' on a man because he's a friend to the family, then it's good-bye to the effeeciency of this estate, ma'am.' "

"You don't have to think about that," said Kip, quietly. "I'm asking no favors."

"Weel, ye say that, and ye mean it, I'm no doubtin'," said the superintendent, grimly; "but ye may forget it in time. There is them that worrrk, and them that play, and the least they have to do with one another, the better in my opeenion."

V

Kip and his mother and his aunt moved out to the little cottage, taking the best black walnut furniture from the old home. There were two bedrooms downstairs for the ladies, and above was a bit of attic which was not counted as a room, but was made into a "den" for Kip. The fruits and vegetables were abundant, and so was the gas and electricity; the milk was of the best and presently was discovered to include butter. Every problem apparently was solved—even that of Taylor Tibbs. When Roger heard that this friend to drinking gentlemen was out of a job, he put the case before his cousin Jenny, and Taylor was installed at the bottom of that large social pyramid, the Fessenden household. Once or twice a week thereafter he would drop in on the Tarleton ladies, and stand and grin, and ask if there was any hard work to be done; if there was, and he got a quarter for it, he always showed the same benevolent surprise.

Kip had no trouble with this job. He was exactly the earnest and conscientious soul that was required; full of copybook maxims about making his employer's interests his own. He quite understood that it was necessary to be up early in the morning, to make

sure that the road laborers kept their time schedule. He understood that the potato-digging machine must not be left out in the rain to rust away. He realized that it was necessary to check the load of lumber brought to the carpenter-shop, to discover whether the carpenter had entered into a conspiracy with the lumber-yard. In short, he took toward the Fessenden estate the same attitude which he had taken to the Tarleton House; he worked tirelessly to increase its productivity, and keep down its expenses, and his attitude to the problem was untroubled by any question as to what use the Fessenden family might be making of the money he saved for them.

Kip worked on the place for a week or two before he saw the owner of it. The banker spent most of his days in town, in this time of grave strain in the financial world. He had an apartment on top of the Fessenden Trust Building, and his little yacht would lie for a week or two unused in the "millionaires' basin." Then, one Saturday, Kip was getting some instructions from McCallum about the painting of the fence of the rose-gardens; and here came strolling a dapper little gentleman of sixty or so, with scanty gray hair and a much-lined face. "It's the boss," whispered McCallum, and all other business was set aside.

"Hello, McCallum, what's the gardener trying to do to the asparagus bed this time of year? And when are they going to get that boat out of the water?" So it went, one thing after another. When there came a lull, the superintendent said: "Mr. Fessenden, this is Tarleton, my new asseesstant." The banker gave a nod of the head, and a motion of one finger instead of a handshake. "Hello, Tarleton." Then he began talking about the need of a culvert at one place where the road into the estate had a tendency to wash. Evidently, there wasn't going to be any nonsense about social relationships with employees. Or possibly the great man had never been told that his new assistant superintendent had once been a week-end guest at his home.

Anyhow, Kip had become a cog in the machine; a system reproducing in all its essentials the feudalism of six hundred years back. Richard E. Fessenden III had inherited this estate from his father, and the father had inherited it from a grandfather, and so as far back as local memories went. Most of the employees had been born on the estate, or in the village of Seaview, on the railroad; to the oldest grannie, the name of Fessenden had been a name of power, and to get a job at Broadhaven was the goal of life. If you talked

with any worker on the estate, you would learn that he was a free American, as good as any man, and perhaps better; but if it happened that Mr. Fessenden came along you would see the worker touch his hat and lower his tone. Each person took his assigned position in the social pyramid, and if there was one inclined to self-assertion—well, New York was only a couple of hours away, and he could go there and become a taxi-driver, or a gangster, as he preferred.

VI

Kip took his position among these employees, near the top, with only Mr. and Mrs. McCallum for his social superiors. His position on the estate was strangely affected by the fact that he had slept one night in one of the guest-rooms of the mansion, and had his outing-clothes and dinner-costume laid out by one of the servants. This revolutionary fact made the Tarleton family the object of a devouring curiosity. Instead of being taken at once into the fellowship of gossip, they would be held at arm's length and inspected, and discussed behind their backs, as to the possibility that they might be spying upon the other employees, and carrying tales to the master or mistress.

Mrs. McCallum came calling as soon as the family was settled. She was a lean, angular Scotch Presbyterian, with brick-red complexion, strict moral ideas, and a stern disapproval of life among the idle rich. But this feeling she dared to voice only to intimates of her own way of thinking; for the most part, her rage was bottled up, and escaped in snorts and gleams of the eye. She came to look the Tarleton ladies over; they, of course, returned the call, and had tea with scones, and met the four little McCallums, starched and prim; also the housekeeper from the mansion, and one of the lady pensioners of the lower ranks.

After the Tarleton ladies had departed, the others stayed to discuss them. It was obvious that they were gentlewomen, in spite of the fact that they had kept a boarding-house. They had been polite, and there was no serious fault to be found with them. It was just an accident that Mr. Chilcote had happened to stay at their boarding-house, and so had got to know them. They did not boast about it, but only answered questions. The son was a moral young man, in spite of knowing that terrible dissipated playwriter, who had been living openly with an actress in the city. Miss Chil-

cote had come and had tea with them, and had taken the young man driving in one of the family cars, late in the afternoon; and of course that was all right, if Mrs. Fessenden chose to sanction it; it was coming to be the custom for young women to go off with their men friends, but you might be sure the McCallum daughters were never going to do it.

It is impossible for ladies to live entirely without gossip; especially those who, like Miss Dimmock, Kip's aunt, have never been married, and have no children to occupy their time and thoughts. A chirrupy, lively old lady, who had formerly had charge of eight or ten chambermaids and waitresses, and had made the fancy desserts for fifty or sixty boarders—and now she had only a five-room cottage! Inevitably she would know what was going on! Presently Aunt Sue was repeating to Kip's mother the terrible stories of Mrs. Haskins, the housekeeper, about how the maids were behaving with the gardener's assistants and the young fellows at the boathouse. There were perfectly scandalous conditions prevailing in the dormitories where the men laborers were housed; and some time back, when Mr. McCallum had discharged the garage-man because he had kept one of the maids out all night, the master had interfered, and said it was none of the superintendent's business what the men or women did off the place, and Broadhaven wasn't a Presbyterian Sunday school. Of course, said Mrs. Haskins, what could you expect, when the master of the place lived as Mr. Fessenden did?

Miss Dimmock asked with awe, was Mr. Fessenden a bad man? The housekeeper said it wasn't her business to talk, but anybody who kept their ears open on the place would get them full. So Aunt Sue and Kip's mother talked in whispers about these rumors, and how unhappy Mrs. Fessenden looked—they could see her from their front windows, cutting big chrysanthemums in one of her gardens. Of course neither Kip's aunt nor his mother would talk to him about scandals; but they would tell him about the reputation of this employee or that for slacking on the job, or for selling produce, or for taking cars out for his own purposes. There were a thousand forms of petty graft to be discovered, and Kip would take his discoveries to McCallum, and generally the superintendent would say that the situation was hopeless, the next fellow you got would likely be worse. The Scotchman was extremely pessimistic about the state of American morals. Something had happened to workingmen since the war; they had lost all pride in their jobs, and each

one was thinking of getting himself decked out in a silk shirt and socks, and getting hold of an automobile, and taking out a girl and a jug of whisky for the night.

VII

Kip, being sensitive, and unaccustomed to feudalism, fell to worrying about his relations to Maggie May, and how they would be affected by his enlistment on the Fessenden payroll. He saw that all the others kept their places in this social pyramid; so, when she invited him to "come up to lunch today," he said, with no little embarrassment, "Miss Maggie May, I don't think your cousin will want me there now."

"For goodness sake, why not?"

"Well, you see, none of the other employees ever visits the house, and I don't want to seem to be forcing myself forward."

"But how absurd, Mr. Tarleton! You are being invited."

"I know; but I might be embarrassing Mrs. Fessenden, and she might be too polite to say so. They have a sort of discipline here. Naturally, they couldn't have their employees calling socially."

"But Cousin Jenny is from the South, and doesn't feel that way about things."

"She's living in the North now, and perhaps can't have her own way. I know that Mr. Fessenden doesn't want to break down the bars, because, when I was introduced to him the other day, he barely nodded to me."

"I don't think he knew about you, Mr. Tarleton. You must remember, he's very busy, having a lot of trouble, just as we are down home. The first chance I get, I'll tell him about you, and I know he'll be cordial; he's really a very charming person when he warms up."

"You ask Mrs. Fessenden, please, before I come to lunch. If you don't mention it any more, I won't have my feelings hurt."

All right," said she, "if that's your idea. But I know it's quite absurd."

Maggie May telephoned that evening; she had spoken to "Cousin Jenny," and Kip was invited to lunch the following day. So he went—after notifying the sternly disapproving McCallum, and promising not to overstay his allotted hour. He was received with cordiality, Mrs. Fessenden saying that she had been meaning to call upon his mother and aunt, but had not been very well. She would come in the next few days.

Of course Kip reported this at home, and so the little cottage was in apple-pie order; the tea-things set out every afternoon, with a supply of Aunt Sue's special cookies, and both those old ladies dressed up—not too fancy, but the right compromise between old-fashioned dignity and modern enterprise. These were the days when spinsters and mothers-in-law were learning to "step out," and to show a bit of their ankles, if they had any.

The great lady of the domain came strolling over, wearing the grey linen duster and gauntlets she wore when playing in her garden, and carrying a present of chrysanthemums with great long stems. She was tall, rather dark, and must be over forty, with dark rings and the beginning of pouches under her eyes. She had the serene manner of those who get what they want from other people, and do not have to be fussy or eager. She was kind to the two gentlewomen in distress—for no Southerner ever forgets how the Yankees once came in and freed all their slaves, and reduced ladies to doing their own work. No, it is the final test of gentility, to judge people by their ancestors, rather than by their purses.

Being persons of true delicacy, Mrs. Tarleton and Miss Dimmock did not return this call. They waited; and after the passage of a couple of months, the mistress of the mansion called again, this time bringing roses from the greenhouse. Nothing was said about their failure to call, and so, with perfect tact, a social compromise was worked out. Kip would have lunch at the Fessenden home when Maggie May invited him, which was once in a week or two; but he was not invited to dinner, nor when there was any chance of his having to encounter the banker in his home. So Kip understood that he was ranked with the old lady pensioners of the middle order.

VIII

There was only one flaw in the compromise; which was the attitude of the Fessenden children. Children are conservative, and when they have been brought up on the apex of a pyramid, they do not relish having strangers shoving in around their feet.

There were three children: Richard E. Fessenden IV, known as "Master Dick"; "Miss Evelyn"; and "Master Bobbie," the young one whom Kip had met on his first visit to Broadhaven. All three were tall, taking after their mother; all three were slender, or what, if you were impolite, might be called "weedy"; all three were aris-

tocratically pale, and their health was uncertain. Mrs. Haskins, the housekeeper, whispered dire hints to Aunt Sue; there was "bad blood" in these old families, they had been intermarried too much in the old days. Aunt Sue said, for her part, she thought there was plenty of reason for their ill health in the hours they kept, and the fact that the older boy and the girl had a cigarette in their mouths or fingers every time you saw them.

Master Dick and Miss Evelyn went to fashionable boarding-schools, and in the summer they went motoring to visit friends at Newport or Bar Harbor or the Adirondacks. Now and then, when they honored Broadhaven with their presence, you observed the "younger set" at close range. They were perfect reproductions of the old people, except that they selected for cultivation the faults, and were bored by the better qualities. They sipped their drinks with a perfect air, they lighted their cigarettes with easy gestures, and tossed them away after a few puffs; they got their clothes from the right haberdasher, and changed them for every occasion; they knew who was who in every line of sport, and made it a point to attend every event that was fashionable, no matter how far away. When they met Kip anywhere on the place, they knew exactly the motion of the finger whereby their father had put him in his place. "Hello, Tarleton," they would say, and then, unless they had an order to give, his presence was forgotten.

It was Master Bobbie who was the special torment of Kip's life. Master Bobbie was always on the place, and into everything. He had a passion for driving motor-cars, the bigger and more expensive the better; he was forbidden to drive them outside the estate, but inside he would go dashing about the roads, honking, and expecting road-scrapers and herds of cows to clear the way for him. He liked to get out the boats after the boatman had gone home, and leave them tied to the pier, to have the paint knocked off when a breeze sprang up in the night. He liked to get a stick and poke the hogs through the pen, and keep them in an uproar of squealing. In short, he liked to do everything that made trouble, and brought him into conflict with an assistant manager.

The carpenter was building a store-house, and putting "bats" on the outside, and Master Bobbie wanted some of these long sticks to play with, so he carried them off. Then he wanted the carpenter's plane, and when the carpenter refused to let him have it, he picked it up and ran off with it. It happened that Kip was witness to the event; and having been told to protect the property of

the estate, and see that the men did their work efficiently, he stopped the youngster and blocked his path. Bobbie stood there in a fury, with the tool behind his back, raging and storming at Kip; it was probably the first time in his life he had had to obey anybody but his father, and he took it extremely hard. When he tried to break by, Kip held him by the arms; his hair fell into his eyes, and when he opened his mouth to yell, Kip looked into a large red cavern. When he began kicking Kip's ankles—well, he was thirteen now, and tall for his age, so the assistant superintendent had to throw him down and take the plane away from him, and afterwards dodge the stones he threw. In the end the boy rushed off, beside himself, declaring that he would have Kip put off the place at once.

As it happened, it was a day when Kip was invited to lunch. He was in the drawing-room when the youngster spied him.

"What are you doing here? You know we don't allow the outside servants in the house! Get out of here!"

"Oh, you sweet young thing," thought Kip; but he said not a word. He sat down and took a magazine and began to read—wondering if the youngster would throw an inkwell or an ashtray at him.

The boy went off, saying he would tell his mother. He did not appear at lunch, nor did the governess, and Kip could imagine what had happened; Master Bobbie had refused to come to the table if that "outside servant" was allowed to remain. After the lunch, Kip spoke to Mrs. Fessenden, who said, pitifully: "I don't know what I am going to do with Bobbie. Nobody can handle him but his father, and he is so seldom here."

"Well," said Kip, "I suppose I am to do what Mr. McCallum tells me, and take care of the property."

"I suppose so, Mr. Tarleton; I have every confidence in you. But do be careful and don't hurt him." Kip, whose ankles were covered with black and blue marks, promised that he would not hurt Master Bobbie.

IX

Roger Chilcote was staying on at Broadhaven. He had got used to the little cottage among the pine-trees, and was writing another play. He had managed somehow to work out the problem of visitors and social obligations; after all, he would have that problem wherever he went, for there would always be fools pushing in to

have a look at a famous writer, and to bore him with compliments. Roger wasn't happy, he would never be that; but after he had mooned around for a couple of weeks, and grumbled at everything, and cursed a universe of fortuitous electrons, rapidly disintegrating under the second law of thermodynamics—then unexpectedly he would turn up at breakfast-time, pale, with golden hair unbrushed, saying: "Well, I got that damned passage written just now." He would drink three cups of coffee, and say: "I'm going to sleep, and then I'll be all right. Cousin Jenny, you can invite that moron of yours, Miss Manchester, or whatever her name is, tomorrow; but I warn you in advance, I'm not going to fall in love with any moron, so you're wasting your schemes."

Mrs. Fessenden, a woman disappointed in both husband and children, had entered into a conspiracy with Maggie May; they would, between them, find some "nice girl" for Roger to take an interest in. They tried every kind they could think of: quiet, domestic ones, brilliant, vivacious ones, rich and haughty ones, poor and humble ones, blonde ones, dark ones, slender ones, and those who were reducing. They would invite these as house-guests, or to tea, or to theatre-parties—any girl would come anywhere, of course, on chance of meeting Roger Chilcote; in fact, they would offer themselves. "Oh, Mrs. Fessenden, they tell me Roger Chilcote is staying with you. Won't you be good and let me meet him?"

They would come; and maybe Roger would be there and maybe not. If he was, he might start reciting poetry, and do nothing else; or again, he might act like Tennyson, who encountered a worshipful American admirer at a dinner-party, and uttered only five words: "I like my mutton bloody." Whatever Roger did, you could be sure he would never ask to meet the young lady again, and often he wouldn't get her name straight. Miss Sibyl Massingham, graduate of Vassar, and heiress to a good part of the State of Wyoming, would be referred to as "that moron of yours, Miss Manchester."

Roger was following his program of "drinking like a gentleman": which meant that he never let his sister see him drunk. Every now and then he would disappear for two or three days, and come back like an old tom-cat from a foray. Was there a woman in the case? Roger did not tell, and Maggie May did not venture to ask. It couldn't be Lilian Ashton, because she was on the road with a new play. The sister had to be content with the fact that Roger was always gentle and affectionate with her, and said she was the only good influence in his life.

Maggie May would come now and then to Mrs. Fessenden, and say: "I really must be going back home, Cousin Jenny; Mama is so lonely, and they need me." The other would reply: "But, Maggie May, what will Roger do without you?" The girl would argue: "But Cousin Jenny, I can't stay on forever! Surely, I'll be wearing out my welcome." The response would be: "Don't talk nonsense, child. Can't you see that Roger is the brightest jewel in my crown? All sorts of interesting people come out here, who wouldn't ever look at me if I had no lion on the place." So then Maggie May would write home that she couldn't get away yet. It is a custom in the South to go visiting; there was a cousin of Maggie May's at Pointe Chilcote, and also an elderly aunt—each of whom had come to stay for a week or two, and were now in their second year.

X

Besides the match-making secret which Mrs. Fessenden shared with Maggie May, she had another which she shared with old Mrs. Wendel, the favorite among her pensioners: the fact that she was going to find a husband for Maggie May. It was a shame for such a lovely girl to be buried alive in that country of malaria and mosquitoes. So, along with heiresses to lure the author of "The Golden Jail," there came heirs to meet his quiet and gentle sister. Maggie May would receive these "eligible" men, knowing perfectly well what they were. She would apply to each candidate her formula—to find out what he was doing, and get him talking about it as quickly as possible. She would say: "Oh, how interesting! Do you really do that? And how do you do it, and what do you think will happen?"—and so on.

Maggie May would make jokes about this key to social success; but really she was curious to know about these strange kinds of men in the North. She wondered about a captain of a polo-team—a game which looked frightfully reckless! Or about a man who was building a boat in the shape of a flat dish, which was going to skim over the water faster than any dish in human history! Or one who had been close to the South pole, and had to live on walrus-meat! Or a professor of mathematical physics, who understood bewildering formulas! Or one who knew about the wheat-pit, and how it worked, and was able to make a million dollars while all the farmers were being ruined! It sounded cruel, but when she told him so, he explained that there was no way to help it, and if he hadn't won,

somebody else would have. When she accepted this, he decided that she was a highly intelligent girl, and invited her and her aunt to a theatre-party.

Watching this social life, as it were through a window, was Kip Tarleton, the "outside servant." He told himself a dozen times a day that it was absurd for him to think of Maggie May; yet he thought of her all the time, and each new millionaire or celebrity caused him another fit of despair. One time he went to lunch, and there was the visiting son of a British cabinet minister; an insufferable person who gave lectures—only twenty-two years old, yet with the air of a prime minister, and apparently all ready to step into his father's shoes. He had come to point out to Americans the perils of Bolshevism, and to advocate an international union to put it down. That was all right, so far as Kip could see; but he could not forgive the insolence of a youth who knew everything about every subject, and told it to a couple of thousand people with an air which said: "Of course you understand, I belong to the claahss which is meant to rule the world." It must be that he had his eye on Maggie May, else why did he keep coming out to Broadhaven? Why should Mrs. Fessenden take Maggie May to his lectures, unless she was figuring to be the cousin of the wife of the future Prime Minister of the World?

Poor Kip had a hundred and fifty dollars a month, and a five-room cottage with gas and electricity, fruit and vegetables, milk and butter—and eggs, now, as reward for efficiency! He was imagining himself with a wife—and no place to put her! "Peter, Peter, pumpkin-eater, had a wife and couldn't keep her—put her in a pumpkin-shell—!" Would Kip expect his mother and aunt to move out of their five-room pumpkin-shell, and rent rooms in the village? Or would the kind-hearted Mrs. Fessenden make another addition to the list of her pensioners? No, it was absurd for Kip to go mooning around with such an idea in his head.

There came news from Pointe Chilcote, and Maggie May told Kip about it. The uncles and brothers had raised another crop of sugar-cane, and sold it below cost; the banks had forced them to do it, being unable to carry their notes any longer. The First National Bank of Acadia, in which Lee Chilcote was a heavy stockholder, had forced him to put up some of his land as security for notes which he couldn't meet; and then, right after it, the bank had turned round and failed, and under the Federal banking laws, Lee was stuck for double the par value of his stock, having to make

that amount good to the depositors. So he was going to have to sell another piece of land, the family heritage—at a time when nobody in the Teche country had money to buy anything.

Ordinarily, this would have been pleasant news to Kip. Maggie May was on her way down to his financial level! But it happened that on this same day, she was going into the city with her cousin, to hear the future Prime Minister of the World discuss the subject of "Modern Science and the Renewal of Faith." So Kip got little comfort; no, it was manifest that the Fessenden's would never permit their charming young relative to sink in the social scale. Rather, they would renew their efforts to find her a suitable husband; and Maggie May would realize that she could no longer hesitate, and "wither up into an old maid." Pretty soon she would be telling him that she was engaged to the future Prime Minister, or perhaps to the polo-player, or to the new "wheat king." She would owe it to her family to do this—and whatever Maggie May owed to her family, she would surely do. The sensible thing for Kip was to wish her happiness, and stop tormenting himself with vain and futile dreams.

But all the same, he was glad when he heard that the precocious young Englishman had started off on a lecture tour to California via Manitoba.

XI

One winter day Kip went into New York on shopping errands for McCallum; and since he had to have lunch somewhere, he called up the office of the "Gothamite," and made an appointment with the cheery voice of Jerry Tyler. They hadn't met since the wedding which had busted up the Tarleton House. Marriage seemed to be agreeing with him; his tall form was filling out, and his cheeks were round, and his eyes laughing with the joy of life in Manhattan. What a time they had, swapping gossip, and putting Kip up to date with the insides of literature!

Roger Chilcote had kept his affairs from his sister, and from the "little moral demon," but he had revealed them to an editor of flippancy and fashion. Jerry told how "Rodge" had had a final row with Lilian, and she had taken up with the leading man in her company on the road. "Rodge" was now deeply impressed by a "pastel blonde" whom he had met at Jerry's home some time back, the young wife of an extra-heavy manufacturer of ball-bearings and

machine-tools. Jerry didn't know just how far things had gone, but he knew that the lady was in Reno; and surely there was only one reason for losing one's self in that wilderness in winter!

They discussed the progress of Roger's new play. The poet had gone back to the revolutionary war, and taken a story grim and terrible enough to satisfy the most exacting esthete. Ignoring the comforts of a millionaire estate, Roger tormented himself to attain the mood of a young Tory officer who had to turn loose his Indian allies upon a village in which his former sweetheart was sleeping. The heroine of this tragedy was not an innocent maiden—that would have made the story insufferable, mere "movie stuff"; no, she was the unhappy wife of a merchant of wool and hides. They had no ball-bearings and machine-tools in those backward days, so Jerry explained, but anyone who read the manuscript would be able to pick the wife of the ball-bearing and machine-tool manufacturer. Roger was again being frugal, like a Renaissance painter, using his mistress for a model!

Also, there was gossip about other friends and acquaintances. Come to the editor of the "Gothamite" if you wanted to know what was what! "Did you see that stuff in the tabs about your boss?" inquired Jerry; and Kip said no, he didn't have time for literature. "They say Fessenden's in a jam," said the editor. "He's got in over his head in German marks." It appeared that American speculators had bought huge quantities of German money, in effect betting that Germany would "come back"; but apparently the German government had determined to shed its old obligations, for the mark took a new plunge every day. Said Jerry: "The master of Broadhaven may have to cut out some of his fancy pleasures."

This gave Kip a chance to clear up the mystery about his employer. "What does Mr. Fessenden do that's so bad, Jerry?"

"Hasn't he invited you over to his apartment on Christie Street? They say he owns a tenement over there, and has it fixed up in imitation of an Eastern harem. There was a fellow in our office recently, a discharged servant with a grudge, who wanted to spill a lot of stuff about our leading social lights; he offered to take us to the place, but we didn't bite."

"Mr. Fessenden doesn't look like that sort of man," said Kip.

"If you examine him closely, you'll see he has a wild eye. Apparently he's one of those old fellows who have to have 'em young; they can't get any thrill, unless it's the first time. And of course that makes it expensive."

"Dangerous, too," said Kip, striving to keep his comments in the proper casual tone.

"Nothing is dangerous, if you have the money," replied the editor of the "Gothamite." "If blackmailers get after you, you pay them—or pay the police."

So Kip had something new to think about, as the train took him back the hundred mile length of Long Island. By golly, you learned something new about the Island of Manhattan every time you went into it! And something new about the feudalism of the surrounding country!

Feudalism was the word; or else royalty. Kip, in the course of half a year, had come to realize that he was living in one of those courts about which he had read in ancient days. There was a king, and a queen, and princes of the royal blood, and a swarm of courtiers dancing attendance, and servants and retainers ministering to their pleasures. And all the attention of the community centered upon those at the top; the rulers living in the limelight, in a blaze of glory; tied in a network of intrigue, subtle and yet powerful as fate; surrounded by a murmur of gossip, multitudinous as the wind in forest trees. We are royalty, and your lives depend upon our whims! All that you have to do in life is to understand us, and all you think about is to flatter us with your words—and stab us with your secret, deadly hates!

Yes, it was all in the history books! The king had his pleasures, which could not be kept secret; also his cares of state—"uneasy lies the head that wears a crown!" The queen was unhappy, eating out her heart with grief. The members of the royal line, the heirs of glory—they were weaklings, as had happened to princes and princesses all down the ages. Apparently frail children's nature cannot stand the strain of intrigue and flattery and self-indulgence, of wealth unearned and power without capacity. Now, as throughout history, the stairway echoed with the sounds of wooden shoes climbing up, and of satin slippers coming down!

Kip thought of that; he thought, with sudden flashes of illumination, of workingmen who took commissions, and stole time, and carried off produce. He understood the demoralization spreading through Broadhaven, and why the sternest of Scotch Presbyterian superintendents had given up trying to check it, and taken to collecting his share of graft. Why should anybody deprive himself of the price of movie tickets for himself and his girl, in order that an

elderly Wall Street banker should "have 'em young," and be able to pay off blackmailers and police?

And then a thought, most traitorous of all! If the price of German marks should follow the price of sugar-cane—if Richard E. Fessenden III should follow Lee Chilcote down the stairway of history—then at last there might be a chance of Maggie May's coming to live in a five-room cottage!

CHAPTER ELEVEN · · SCANDAL

I

IT was springtime, the busy season of the year for farmers, including those on "gentlemen's estates." Many more workingmen have to be kept busy, and a conscientious manager will be on the go from morning till night, having little time for social engagements, or for gossip, or for worrying about whom the young lady guests at the mansion are going to marry, or how the master of the estate is enjoying himself. It was a time of bright sunshine, and warm rains falling on crumbly brown earth, and green things coming up, a thousand different kinds, each obedient to its own mysterious inner laws. Plants are so much easier to get along with than humans; they know what they want to do, and you can depend upon them; if you treat them decently, they behave themselves, and do not go wandering off, developing strange and terrifying vices.

At long intervals Kip would get a glimpse of his employer strolling about inspecting his acres, according to the country gentleman tradition. If Maggie May had ever spoken to him about his assistant superintendent, he gave no sign, but continued to keep his employees in their places. Now and then Kip would steal a glance at him, looking for signs of that "wild eye" of which Jerry had spoken. He saw a stern and obstinate but rather worried-looking old man, about whom it was difficult to imagine the dreadful things which Jerry had told him. It was always hard for Kip to imagine evil; he took the world at its face value, and was impressed by its dignities and proprieties.

He continued to hear rumors about financial difficulties, and looked for signs of these. Every Saturday afternoon he wondered, would he be told there was no money to pay the men? On the last day of each month, he wondered about his own check. But he always got it, and the bank always accepted it, and gradually he was confirmed in his idea that money troubles didn't mean the same thing to the great ones of the earth as they had meant to his mother and father. When you had the Fessenden Trust and the Fessenden

National behind you, you could always manage to get money, no matter what might happen to German marks.

It was the same way at Pointe Chilcote, Kip gathered. Lee had had to sell some land, but there was plenty left, and he had planted another crop of cane. There was nothing else to do in the Teche country; you had to feed your Negroes, or what would become of them? If you left the land idle for a season, it would grow up in such thickets that the cost of clearing it would be worse than a price slump. Sugar was bound to come back, the planter told himself; it was everybody's patriotic duty to say that it would, and to borrow money on his faith.

Kip supervised the planting of fields of wheat and rye and corn, of beans and potatoes and celery and lettuce. He saw pale, yellowish thumbs come sticking out of the ground from well-nourished asparagus roots; he saw rhubarb spreading large green leaves from thick red stems, and bright pinkish spots appearing under the shelter of strawberry plants. He went with his mother and aunt every Sunday morning, and besought the Lord to preserve to their use the kindly fruits of the earth, and the answer to his prayer came in the form of large bundles of produce, brought by one of the gardeners of Broadhaven. His mother was in better health, not having to work so hard, or to worry so much. His aunt was as cheerful and chipper as a sparrow, growing younger every day, she declared. Life wore a pleasant aspect to Kip Tarleton.

II

Springtime was so beautiful at Broadhaven, it was hard to guess that tragedy was hanging over the heads of the owners. Master Dick and Miss Evelyn came home for their Easter holidays, and for a week there fluttered about Kip's head the wings of golden butterflies. The weather being warm and dry, the tennis courts were rolled and marked, and young people came in white flannels and chiffons, and there was gaiety and laughter, and evidence of the free spending of money. Dick was a lanky prep-school youth, with pimples on his face and a gold-tipped cigarette between his fingers. Evelyn was suddenly a young lady, with the airs of a princess, and brightly painted cheeks, and a double scarlet streak across her face.

They went back to school—and Kip went on overseeing the ploughing of orchards, and the scraping and caulking of boats. Until one night, the telephone routed him from sleep. Mrs. Fes-

senden was calling. The chauffeurs had been let off duty, and she had to go to New York by the late train; would Kip be so good as to drive her to the station? He slipped on his clothes, and in a few minutes was at the door with a car. By the light of the porte-cochère he got a glimpse of the face of his passenger, deeply distressed, and on the drive he heard her catch her breath in a sob.

"Is there anything I can do, Mrs. Fessenden?" he asked.

"No," she replied. "Thank you, Mr. Tarleton."

"Would you like me to go to town with you?"

"No, I'll be met in town." Then, after a moment, she added: "Don't say anything about my going."

Of course he promised, and kept the promise; it was from other sources, perhaps in New York, that the story "leaked." Along in the middle of the afternoon, the superintendent's wife came rushing in to Aunt Sue—they were now on cordial gossiping terms—and opened up: "Oh, Miss Dimmock, have you heard the news?" Miss Dimmock hadn't, so Mrs. McCallum reaped her quota of glory. "Mrs. Pollock, the druggist's wife, just phoned from Seaview; the papers have come in, and the 'Evening Star' says that Miss Evelyn has disappeared from boarding-school!"

Kip's mother ran in from the kitchen. Impossible for elderly ladies to fail to thrill to such words! "Oh, Mrs. McCallum! Oh, you don't say so!"

"The 'Star' has got it all over the front page! She went to a matinee yesterday afternoon, and evaded her chaperone, and no one has seen her since, and a private detective agency has been asked to find her."

"Did you ever hear of such a thing! And in the papers already!"

"It's all over town, Mrs. Pollock says. She wanted to know if I knew anything about it; of course I don't, but I've always said—"

"Do you suppose she's been kidnapped, Mrs. McCallum?"

"No, indeed I don't! I've said from the beginning—" and here the superintendent's wife glanced at the open windows, and dropped her voice to a delightful whisper—"I've always said that a girl brought up like that, allowed to form such habits—you know what I mean, Miss Dimmock—drinking cocktails and smoking cigarettes all over the place—and with a father setting such an example—"

"Do you suppose she knows about her father?"

"You can't keep anything from the young people nowadays, with these moving pictures, and newspapers full of crimes and sensation. Now she's following in her father's footsteps——"

"Oh, you really think that?"

"Mark my words, that's what you'll find out about it. The paper'll prove it, never doubt. Mrs. Pollock says they've got a picture of Miss Evelyn that isn't her at all, and they've got a headline all the way across the page: 'HEIRESS MISSING: SCANDAL FEARED.'"

III

On the evening of that earthquake day, there drew up in front of the Tarleton cottage a taxicab from the village, and out of it stepped a young lady in fashionable short skirt and silken hose indistinguishable from skin. "Mrs. Tarleton?" said she. "I'm Miss Allison—you don't remember me, of course, but I was at the Tarleton House once, visiting Mrs. Gwathmey. I happened to be in Seaview, and I promised the Gwathmeys I'd be sure to call on you." So of course Mrs. Tarleton was delighted; she didn't remember this dashing young lady, but she couldn't be expected to remember everybody who had visited the Tarleton House in the course of so many years. She and Aunt Sue vied with each other in making themselves agreeable.

They talked about how the Gwathmeys were getting on, and how the Tarletons were getting on, and how Kip liked his job—Kip happened to be out during this visit, but his mother and aunt told all about his work. Presently the young lady said: "Isn't that a strange thing about Miss Evelyn, and what do you suppose has happened?" The Tarleton ladies said they didn't know, and Miss Allison said she was told that the picture in the "Evening Star" wasn't Miss Evelyn at all; what did she really look like? Aunt Sue told what she looked like, and Miss Allison said: "You never can tell what is going to happen to girls now-a-days; I think it's dreadful, the way they're allowed to run around with men, and nobody to chaperone them, or even know when they come in at night."

Neither Mrs. Tarleton nor Miss Dimmock would have gossiped about Evelyn Fessenden with a stranger. But when the lady herself seemed to know about the situation, and when all they had to do was to say, "Yes, it's terrible," or, "No, I don't think girls ought to be allowed to"—well, they said it, and in the course of an hour's chat they had said a great deal. They had given the names of several fashionable young men who frequented Broadhaven when Evelyn was at home, and they had told about the cocktail parties

of the seventeen-year-old heiress, and admitted that she had been carried into the home several times, and that there had been complaints from the boarding-school about her going off without permission. They even mentioned her fondness for scarlet scarfs and stockings. In short, they gave a detailed picture of the life of a millionaire flapper, in these postwar days when all flappers bobbed their hair, and cut their skirts off so that their garters were as obvious as the vaccination marks on their bare arms.

Miss Allison had tea and cake, and then drove away in her taxicab; and next afternoon the stiff and stern Mrs. McCallum came running, more breathless than the first time. "Oh, Mrs. Tarleton, what do you think—Mrs. Pollock says the afternoon papers are in, and the 'Star' has got a whole page about Miss Evelyn! 'Why Girls Leave Palaces!' it's called; 'A Wild Bird Flies from the Nest!' They have managed to find out everything about her—even the fact that she wore scarlet scarfs and stockings!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Tarleton and Aunt Sue in chorus.

"How in the world do you suppose they managed to get all that?"

"I'm sure I've no idea," said the chorus.

"Those tabloid newspapers are perfectly ghastly! Mrs. Pollock read me nearly all of it, and it's the most awful picture of depravity —you'd think we were running a bad house here, Miss Dimmock!"

Such was the Tarleton family's introduction to tabloid journalism. They kept a terrified silence, and no one ever found out their part in the betrayal of Broadhaven. How the fashionable Miss Allison had managed her trick became evident that same evening, when Taylor Tibbs dropped in for a visit, and said, "Did you see that young lady that knows Missis Gwathmey?" Taylor went on to narrate how he had gone to the drug-store in the village of Seaview and this grand-looking lady had come up smiling, and said, "Hello, Joe." Of course he answered that his name wasn't Joe, it was Taylor. The lady replied with a laugh that she had a bad memory for names, but he had waited on her somewhere, she was sure; where had he worked before he came to Broadhaven? So Taylor had said he worked at the Tarleton House in New York; and the young lady's face lighted up, and she said that was where she had met him.

It was a fixed idea with Taylor Tibbs that anybody who had ever been in the Tarleton House was a superior person; so he told this young lady how the Tarleton family was getting along, and where

they were living, and about the various guests and what had become of them, so far as he had heard. "Who was that old gentleman—the one that liked the good whisky?" asked the young lady, searching her memory; and Taylor's face lighted up—oh, that Tarleton House whisky, and the days of glory that would never return! "You mean Mista Gwathmey?" said he; and of course the young lady meant Mista Gwathmey, and very quickly she collected information about the Gwathmeys—enough to serve her evil purpose.

IV

For a period of four days the mystery of the missing heiress was the sensation of the newspapers of Manhattan. They published many pictures of her, all genuine and no two alike; they published pictures of the mansion in which she had been brought up, and of the boarding-school from which she had disappeared; they published pictures of her mother and father, and of several young men who were said to be her intimates. They published statements of police officials as to clues, and statements of leading clergymen as to why girls leave home. They published the history of the Fessenden family, recalling that Evelyn's father had formerly been the husband of Gloria Fanchon of the Bouncing Babies Sextet, and how she had led him a dance up and down the Great White Way. Evelyn's mother had been picked out by "Dickie's" parents, who had commanded him to settle down or be disinherited; she had been Miss Genevieve Talbot, famous beauty of Mobile, and her cousin was Roger Chilcote, the playwright, who was a guest on the estate, but refused to be interviewed about the disappearance of the heiress.

The people of Broadhaven lived in the glare of the limelight, and faced it with mingled emotions. Those who came from the South shuddered with horror; others, tougher of skin, were thrilled, and wondered if the glare was going to be turned upon them. There were men taking pictures all over the place, and reporters asking questions, to say nothing of police officials and detectives. Everybody you met wanted to talk about it, and it was hard to get work done. You got the papers morning and evening, especially the "tabs," and followed the story from page one to the inside pages, where it ran alongside the department entitled "How Long Should a Girl's Legs Be" (with illustrations); or the other feature: "Should She Tell Him All: With True Stories by Our Readers."

Roger, of course, was furious; his ivory tower had been invaded

by a horde of obscene baboons. He would have liked to take his sister and flee from the pestilence; but Maggie May pointed out that they had accepted Cousin Jenny's hospitality in a time of prosperity, and now must stand by her in trouble. So Roger put his work aside, and went up to New York to consult with Jerry Tyler, who had heard a lot of gossip about Evelyn. When the poet came back to Broadhaven, he told Maggie May the news, and Maggie May told Kip and his mother and aunt. It was a time when Southerners drew together, to defend themselves against the baboons.

Then, in the midst of it all, the prodigal suddenly drove up in an automobile, and strolled in quite casually, announcing herself as Evelyn, Countess Ensenada; her husband was out in the car, and presently she brought him in, a dandy little man of thirty or so, with sharp waxed mustaches and a monocle. She had met him at a tea-party in one of the fashionable hotels, and had instantly realized that here was "romance"—mainly because he looked like a foreign nobleman she had seen in the movies. She had slipped away from her chaperone, and for four days had cruised about the states of New England in a hired automobile, with stops for meals now and then, and one stop for marriage.

What a story that made in the "tabs"! Especially since it took them less than three hours to uncover the fact that "Count Ensenada" had been born in a tenement on Beeckman Street, on the lower west side of the Island of Manhattan, and had begun his career as a waiter at Mouquin's, from there being promoted to gigolo in a dancing club on West 44th Street. It took Mr. Richard Fessenden less than three minutes to kick him out of the house; and there was Evelyn, Countess Ensenada, shut up in her room, guarded by detectives day and night, and the count very much wanted by the police. Oh, glory and thrill for all readers of newspapers, and the sales thermometer of the tabloids breaking the glass!

Broadhaven was a jail, with a prisoner of state inside, and an army of besiegers with pencils in their hands and copy paper stuffing their pockets. They arrived before breakfast, and did not leave before midnight, unless they were individually escorted to the boundary of the estate. Kip Tarleton had to drop his other work, and devote himself to detecting newspapermen disguised as messenger boys and tax-assessors and salesmen of flower-seeds and magazine subscriptions—"Will you help a young man to get through college?" Would you believe it, the dashing Miss Allison actually had the nerve to call on the Tarleton ladies again! She admitted

that she was a reporter, but insisted that she was truly a friend of the Gwathmeys, and to prove it she brought messages from them, and many details as to where and how they were living, and what they looked like, even to the pictures they had on their walls. It turned out afterwards that she had gone to the Gwathmeys and told them she was a friend of the Tarletons, so that she could come back to the Tarletons and tell them she was a friend of the Gwathmeys!

The "Countess Ensenada" sat in her boudoir and wept; whereupon the tabloids published a picture of the mansion, with an arrow marking the windows of the weeping-room. Then came the news that a leading firm of lawyers was taking steps to have the marriage annulled, on the ground that the bride was under legal age, and that duress had been used by the bogus count. The State of New York proceeds in this matter according to the practice of the Roman Catholic Church; proclaiming the wickedness of divorce, and accomplishing the same purpose by annulling the marriage for those who have sufficient money and social influence. So here was the "Countess Ensenada"—the name now in quotes—appearing in court, and photographs of her, with a fan held in front of her face. The sob-sisters described her sobbing as she testified how the bogus "count" had intimidated her on the automobile ride; it was rumored that the husband was safe in the Argentine, having received several thousand dollars from the family as the price of his absence. Anyhow, the marriage was declared non-existent, and plain Evelyn Fessenden was back in Broadhaven, with no more detectives, but with her parents taking the trouble to know where she went at night.

V

Here was a job for Maggie May. Such a good example she was, for mothers to point to! A girl of the old-fashioned sort, who did not get into the tabloids, and bring her parents to the verge of nervous breakdown! "Why don't you be like Maggie May?" Mrs. Fessenden would demand; and so of course Evelyn found it hard to love Maggie May. But she was afraid of her, for Evelyn's spirit had been broken by the scandal, and the horror of her friends, and it was a long time before she wanted to go anywhere or see anybody. To be kind to her, and try to amuse her—that was the sort of thing for which old-fashioned girls are trained, and Maggie May had had experience with a father and a brother. She could not

decline the duty, because one cannot accept favors, and then refuse to return them in case of need.

So Maggie May stayed through another summer, entirely different from the last. Nobody was invited, and only intimate friends came. Roger was working on his play, Master Dick sought his pleasures in homes unclouded by scandal, and Mr. Fessenden remained in the city, betting that the German mark would come back—and seeing it drop from four thousand to the dollar to forty thousand!

There was Cousin Jenny trimming the roses in her garden, and Maggie May playing tennis with Evelyn, or trying to get her interested in a book. It was a delightful time for Kip, because there were no more Italian singers, or prime ministers of the world, or polo-players, or millionaire wheat-plungers. Every now and then the young ladies would call on him to drive them, or even to make up a tennis four with a visiting girl or boy. Kip would come to McCallum and say that he was wanted up at the mansion, and the grim Scotchman would growl: "Weel, I suppose if you can keep her from runnin' away again, 'tis more important than growin' potatoes." So little by little Kip was promoted to a part-time job as companion, or what in fashionable hotels is known as a "Gertrude." Evelyn was polite to him, and even Master Bobbie got accustomed to the presence of an "outside servant" at the family luncheon-table.

An odd thing, this living near the rich—with them, and at the same time apart from them; you had to divide yourself into two beings, with quite contradictory psychologies. In the presence of these favorites of fortune, there must never be any hint of care, of limitation or deficiency; everything must be free, elegant, and abundant. If, for example, a game of cards was being played, Evelyn would say, irritably, "It seems to me we've used these cards a long time." It would be proper for Kip to rise and ring the bell, and summon a servant, and say, "Please bring another deck of cards." Somewhere in the mansion was a storehouse of abundance, from which all possible requirements were supplied.

And Kip himself must be equipped and outfitted according to these standards of ease and plenty. Never would it do for him to appear at the card-table with a smudge on his cuffs or a trace of a frayed thread in his collar. Never must there be dirt under his fingernails—not even the good soil of Broadhaven, got by giving help to the gardener in moving a heavy plant! No, among the rich

everything was immaculate and perfect, and everyone in the world was free from care.

But also, Kip must be able to leave their presence, and become instantly the poor man! He must save his pennies and live on his income, and be rigid in remembering the difference between theirs and his. If ever he were to take a dollar that belonged to them, they would be swift and merciless in their judgment. Even if they offered him a gift, it would be safer to decline, lest he might have seemed to admire the object, or to gaze at it with longing. For one who had a double status like this youth, there were a thousand complications and entanglements, a thousand traps into which his foot might slip. The rich, who seemed so free, so bountiful, were in reality acutely conscious of their property, and all their rights thereto. What else was the basis of their greatness?

VI

Of all their forms of property, the most precious were their women! All those graces and elegancies, those charms and seductions which were the finest flowers of privilege—let him who had a double status beware how he set down his foot in that region of entanglements and traps! Let him not seem to admire excessively, nor to gaze with longing! Let him never cease to remember the difference between theirs and his!

Kip had been carefully brought up, and disciplined by adversity. He had a high sense of honor, and a burning pride. Not for anything on earth would he have taken a penny of the Fessenden's property, nor hinted for the gift of a book, or a box of candy, or even of a rose to take home to his mother. But when it came to the most precious of Fessenden treasures—to one especial woman—his armor was of straw. He followed Maggie May about with his glances, he hung upon her words, he carried her about with him in his fancy all day, and through long hours of the night. With his better reason, he knew his "place"; but his dreams forgot it, all through that summer of bliss and torment.

It was the duel between fiend and conscience reported by Shakespeare's Launcelot. Said the fiend: "She will never be any lower than she is now! Never any nearer to you!" The fiend would cry: "Wake up, man! If you wait, people will forget about the scandal; the German mark will come back, and Mr. Fessenden will be rich again; the price of sugar will go up, and Lee will pay off the mort-

gages; Roger will finish his play, and it'll be a success! Now is your chance!" "'Budge!' says the fiend; 'Budge not!' says my conscience."

Kip's conscience said: "You're crazy! You're plumb off the handle! A girl like that marry you? Where would you put her? What could you suggest to her, that wouldn't be the proposition of a lunatic? No; she would say you're a fortune-hunter, the cheapest thing in the world! She'd have to hurt your feelings, and your friendship would be all over. Be sensible, and forget it." "Conscience,' say I, 'you counsel well; 'Fiend,' say I, 'you counsel well!'"

Said the fiend: "But why doesn't the girl marry one of these men she's been meeting? There's been every sort, and surely some of them must have asked her! Yet she stays single, and withers up into an old maid."

"Do you notice any withering?" jeered conscience. "Did you ever see a girl blooming more?"

"That's all right," countered the fiend, "but the fact is, she's twenty-three, and she's the marrying sort; she must have some reason."

"Oho!" said conscience. "She's sitting around waiting for you to pop the question! To offer her half your magnificent salary, and half the attic in your cottage!"

"There must be some reason she keeps coming down to that cottage, and sits and has tea with two old ladies, and makes them so happy!"

"She's the sort of girl who likes to make old ladies happy. She's all the time doing things for other people."

"There's lots of other old ladies on the place; but she comes to yours!"

"And you really think, if she wanted you, she couldn't find some way to tip you off? Just a bit of pressure of the hand, or a look from those expressive brown eyes?"

"That shows what a dolt you are!" said the proper and modest fiend. "You know she's not that sort of girl. No, she's waiting for you to wake up and show a little gumption."

"What she's doing is being kind to a poor boy. She's paying the debt she owes, because you took an interest in Roger, and tried to help him. But now you'll be a jackass and spoil it all."

"You say that, because you haven't the courage to ask for what you want, and are trying to justify your cowardice! You hang

round, and let your chances slip. Wake up, man! Budge!" says the fiend.

"Budge not!" says my conscience.

VII

In the middle of the summer Roger finished his play, and the manager took it for fall production. Then Roger wanted a rest, and went off for a month's motor-tour; he was indefinite about it, and one didn't have to be cynical to guess that he was not going alone. When he came back, he looked rested and refreshed, and said he had to move up to New York, to give his time to the production of the play. He had a serious talk with his sister, which Kip learned of in the customary round-about way—Roger telling Jerry, and Jerry telling Kip.

Roger had considered that Maggie May was old enough to know what was going on in the world about her, and would have to understand her brother, if she wanted to help him. He didn't believe in marriage, a thing quite out of the question for an artist, who was always growing and changing, and needed new influences in his life. That was why Roger had never had any interest in all those young females whom Maggie May and Cousin Jenny had paraded before him; each of them so obviously seeking to take to herself the name and career of a well-known playwright. The sort of woman Roger was interested in was one who took chances with life, and didn't have to have a contract signed in a church register.

The poet went on to tell about his exquisite pastel blonde, the divorced wife of the manufacturer of ball-bearings and machine-tools; her name was Eileen Pinchon, and she was going in for "concert work." She and Roger were lovers, and had been away together. Maggie May would have to know the situation, because Eileen would be with him in New York, and Maggie May would have to meet her and be polite to her, and there wasn't any sense trying to conceal from one's sister what was known to all the rest of the city. It wasn't fair to Eileen, because it put a stigma upon their relationship.

So there was a show-down, and a modern playwright learned about the point of view of an old-fashioned girl. Maggie May said she knew her brother didn't believe in religion, and that if he didn't want to be registered in a church, that was his affair; but she didn't see how any woman could be happy with a man unless she thought

he was going to stay with her. Any woman who pretended to feel differently was just fooling the man, and perhaps herself. They argued about that; Roger had stories to tell of women who had been the ones to assert their rights, and refuse to tie themselves. All Maggie May could say was, that kind of woman was beyond her understanding.

She said that of course she would be polite to this Miss—or was it Mrs.—Pinchon, when she met her; if she was the woman who could make Roger happy, Maggie May would be glad. She hoped that Roger hadn't chosen another one who drank, and would keep him out all night. Then Roger got on his dignity, as he always did when his weakness was referred to; he said he was getting along very well, and there was no need to worry. He didn't mind adding, for the comfort of his sister, that Eileen didn't drink nearly so much as Lilian Ashton. As a matter of fact, Roger couldn't stand a woman who drank more than she could carry. It was the devil, the way they were learning to souse themselves; it was the fault of this fool prohibition—since it was human nature to do what you were forbidden to do.

Maggie May concluded by hoping that Roger wouldn't think she was "high-hatting" Eileen, or their affair, but here was the fact—she had been away from home more than a year, and Mama missed her terribly. If Roger had found some one he was happy with, and was going to be busy with the play, then Maggie May might as well go back to Pointe Chilcote. Roger said that was all right, of course; she had helped him over a time of depression, for which he would always be grateful. In order not to seem too old-fashioned, Maggie May added that she'd want to meet Eileen before she went; she wanted to know her brother's friends, and understand their point of view. So ended this quite modern conversation; the sister felt that she was coming on, and with a little practice could manage to achieve perfectly the tone of the New York intelligentsia.

VIII

When Kip heard this news, the duel between fiend and conscience took on a character of desperation. It became one of those battles in the World War, which were fought all day and night, and lasted for weeks. Maggie May was going away! He would not see her again for a long time—perhaps never! Was he going to let her go without a word, a hint?

They were sitting out on the loggia an evening after dinner; a quiet affair, en famille, to which Kip had been invited. Cousin Jenny had a headache, and had gone to her room; Evelyn and Bobbie were inside, fooling with a new device which had been contrived for the amusement of the rich, a thing called a "radio," whereby you could hear music and speeches all the way from New York. It didn't work very well, and was liable to break into howls and squeaks; but every now and then you really heard a voice, and it was quite exciting, and young people, and old ones too, would sit at the dials for hours on end, and argue as to who should do the twisting. At least that was the way it was with Evelyn and Bobbie so Kip and Maggie May had the loggia to themselves, with a big gold harvest moon coming up, and scents from the garden providing a form of intoxication not prohibited by the Volstead Act. Maggie May wore a pearl-grey evening gown, and there were those white shoulders and arms which were so perilous to Kip. Never had she been lovelier, and never had his confusion been greater.

"We're going to miss you so much," he said—the "editorial we," in the interest of propriety.

"I've had a most interesting visit, Mr. Tarleton."

"I don't suppose you'll be coming back for a long time, Miss Maggie May." The mournfulness could not be kept out of his tone.

"You must come down to Pointe Chilcote."

"I wish I could, but you know how the work is here."

"You must have a vacation; surely, you've earned one!"

"Nothing has ever been said about a vacation, Miss Maggie May."

"Well, you should ask for it. I'll speak to Cousin Jenny. Wouldn't Christmas be a good time to come?"

"There's a lot of work right at Christmas, on account of guests. But afterwards there's not so much."

"Well, come in January. Mama and Lee would be delighted to have you."

"Oh, I'd love to, Miss Maggie May!"

And there the conversation came to a halt. Kip looked at the golden moon, which seemed to shimmer in the autumn haze; he drank in large quantities of the legal intoxicating odors, and whispered in agony of soul to himself: "No! No! I'd be spoiling it all!"

"Budge!" says the fiend.

"Budge not!" says my conscience.

IX

It was Maggie May speaking; her voice low, and sounding a little queer, somehow. "Mr. Tarleton, what do you really think of me?"

"Why, Miss Maggie May!" stammered Kip, in bewilderment. "You must know, really!"

"No, I don't know, really."

"Why, Miss Maggie May, I think you are the loveliest person—the most wonderful that I ever knew in all my life!"

"But then—why don't you say so?"

"Oh, but—how could I?"

"But why not?"

"Because—surely you know what I—what my position is!"

"You mean, because you are employed by my cousin?"

"I mean—because I haven't anything—and you have so much. I can't presume—" then he stopped, because he couldn't presume to put into words how great his presumption would have been if he had presumed.

After a pause there came her voice again, queerer than ever. "From what I hear, I haven't so much property. But even if I had, would it make me happy? Did it make my father happy? And Roger? Has Cousin Jenny's money made her happy? And Evelyn's?"

"I know, Miss Maggie May; but that's different. I have really nothing."

"You have character. And you're not so old yet. You might make a career somehow."

"Of course, Miss Maggie May, and I hope to; but I can't figure out just how to start; and meantime, here I am, in this restricted position"—such polite Southern phrases he had learned to use! A perfect gentleman, according to the oldest and best tradition; but just now his hands were trembling, and perspiration was breaking out on his forehead.

"You know, Mr. Tarleton"—a psychologist would have detected a note of desperation in the girl's voice—"you know, nowadays it's not unknown for a woman to earn some money."

"Yes, of course."

"Women do it even after they're married."

"Yes, but that isn't fair, Miss Maggie May! A man ought to be ashamed——"

"Jerry Tyler isn't ashamed. His wife works, and they get along very well, it seems."

"Yes, but——"

"I've often thought I would do it. I have something in mind, something I think would be interesting."

"What, Miss Maggie May?"

"Well, it's a long story. You mightn't approve of it. In fact, I'm not sure if you'd approve of many things about me, if you really knew how I feel."

"Oh, Miss Maggie May, I assure you that couldn't be so! I—I think, truly, that you are the best, and the kindest——"

"I know, everybody thinks that; I'm so unselfish, and I like to be that way—God made me so! But the plain truth is, I might want to do what I want, and people would think it was terrible."

"Oh, surely, I couldn't possibly! Whatever you wanted—it couldn't be anything but good."

"For example, I might not want to marry any of the men that Mama picks out for me, or that Cousin Jenny picks out. I might not want to live in a house that looks like a hotel, and manage twenty or thirty servants, and eat my heart out with grief all my days. Would that shock you so much?"

"Why, no, Miss Maggie May! Why, no—I—that is—" the poor wretch was so tangled up, somewhere between the tongue and the brain, that he could find no words at all. "The truth is, I hoped you wouldn't marry any of these men, but I couldn't figure out why you shouldn't."

"Well, the reason was simple. I didn't happen to love any of them. I am selfish, and I won't marry except for love."

"Of course, Miss Maggie May!"

"Then, when I meet a man that I do love, why—then I have to find out if he loves me. Because, naturally, I couldn't let myself love a man who didn't love me."

"Of course—certainly—I know—" Kip stumbled around, to figure out what he knew; and meantime, something with the intensity of a steam-siren was shrieking into his ear: "You fool, you're making the girl propose to you!" Then it said, even louder, after the fashion of steam-sirens: "She IS proposing to you!" His confusion became worse than ever.

"Miss Maggie May, do you mean—I mean, I wish I could know—if it was that—that if I wasn't so poor, and if I had a right to ask you——"

"I mean that your being poor hasn't the first thing in the world to do with it. Let's talk about *us,* and not about money and houses."

"But—you see, I haven't dared."

"I'm giving you permission, right now. I have asked you to tell me what you think about *me.*"

"Oh, Miss Maggie May, of course I'd be the happiest man—if I only thought it was right——"

"Then you really do care for me?"

"I just haven't any words to say it—I haven't let myself think——"

"You are sure? There isn't any doubt about it in your mind?"

"How could there be? I've never thought about anybody else, from the first moment I saw you."

She put out her hand to him, and he caught it, and began to stammer out his bewilderment, and his shocked sense of propriety. Then suddenly she stood up, saying, "Come." Still keeping his hand, she led him across the loggia, and down some steps into the garden; and as soon as they were lost in the shadows of a rose-arbor, she stopped, and faced him, and without a moment's warning, put herself into his arms. "I love you," she said.

The steam-siren changed to trumpets, a whole battery of them lined up in the back of the stage in a grand opera, splitting your ears, announcing the entrance of a king or a queen. Maggie May held up her lips for him to kiss, and he understood that she belonged to him, and he was dizzy with the shock of it; he kissed her lips, and when he found that she didn't mind, he kissed her cheeks, and her eyes. He had that adored person in his arms; she was pledging herself to him! He had never felt such an emotion in his life, and tears began to run down his cheeks.

Then he discovered that Maggie May was sobbing also. They were a very emotional pair. "I'm so happy!" she explained. "I'm so relieved!" And suddenly she buried her face in his shoulder and exclaimed: "Oh, Kip, you made me propose!"

X

They stood, taking alternate sips out of a cup of rapture; until Maggie May said: "We may be missed." So they climbed the stairs, and sat decorously on the loggia again. "I don't want my cousins to know about it," said she. "I want to tell Mama first."

"What will your mother say?" he asked—ready to be in a panic again.

"Mama doesn't know you very well, and I'll have to tell her about you. She wants me to be happy; that's the first thing with her."

"Is it going to shock Mrs. Fessenden?"

"I don't think it will; she thinks a great deal of you. But I don't want to put the responsibility on her—you know how it is."

"Yes," said Kip, the naive one. "She's had scandals enough."

"I want you to come down home and meet everybody; we can be married there—I mean, that is, if you want to marry me. You know, you haven't asked me yet."

"Oh, if you will, *please* marry me!"

"You're sure you don't feel like these New York intellectuals? You aren't afraid of tying yourself up for life?"

"Oh, Maggie May, I'll be so happy—I can't bring myself to believe it's true! What on earth will we do? How will we live?"

"We'll find a way, as other young couples have done. Your mother and aunt said they'd move into the village and let us have the cottage."

"What?" said Kip—thinking that somehow he hadn't heard the words straight.

"I hope you didn't mind my asking them," said the girl, with not the slightest trace of mischief in her tone.

"Why, no. But—did you tell them you were going to—to——"

"To propose to you? Yes, of course. How else could I have got up the courage?"

"You mean—what did they say?"

"Well, they said they thought you would accept me. It would have been dreadful if they'd been mistaken."

Kip's head was somewhat addled, with all these strange things happening. When he thought it over, he realized that there had been something queer in the looks of his mother and his aunt when he bade them goodbye that evening. Now the pair of old witches were sitting at home, imagining what was happening, and waiting for him to bring the news! You could see how helpless a man was in the face of a conspiracy of women; the old ones contributing their cunning and experience, and the young ones their dimples and smiles and wavy brown hair and gentle brown eyes and gleaming white shoulders, and soft tender throats to be kissed!

XI

The golden moon climbed higher, and turned to silver. The radio howled and made noises like a frying-pan on a hot stove, and now and then a fragment of music or a voice: "Good evening, friends of radioland!" A breeze sprang up from over the water, and Kip got Maggie May's wrap for her, and they sat discussing the state of their hearts, and the strange bewilderment that had afflicted them. Now that it was over, Maggie May said it had been silly of them not to find out long ago; but Kip said, how could he have dreamed that Maggie May would think of marrying such an uninteresting person as himself—and when there were so many brilliant and entertaining men all around her. Why had she ever turned them down? She thought it over, and replied: "I used to watch them, and try to make up my mind—because of course Cousin Jenny kept telling me their good points. One thing, I waited to see one of them refuse a drink of liquor, and I didn't see it."

"You wouldn't marry a man that drinks even a little bit, Maggie May?"

"Would you expect me to, with the experiences I've had?" Later on, when Kip told this to Jerry Tyler, the bright young man of Manhattan chuckled gaily, and sang an old refrain, to the effect that "The lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine!" A song which had inspired our grandmothers, he said; but Maggie May had never heard it.

Kip asked his future wife, with no little curiosity, what it was she had in mind as an occupation, in case her husband continued to be a failure as a money-maker. At first Maggie May wouldn't tell him; she said he would laugh at her—and sure enough he did, serious-minded young man though he was. Such an odd notion for a girl to take up! Maggie May said she would like to be a temperance lecturer!

She told him how this idea had come to her. Walking one afternoon through a cross-street in New York, on her way to keep an engagement with her cousin, she had come upon a church, of some evangelical sort, with a sign in front saying that a man was giving a temperance lecture inside. Being early for her engagement, she had gone in to hear what it was like; and so the idea had taken root.

"You liked it so well?" asked Kip.

"I liked it so little," she replied. "There was a feeble old man, and fifteen or twenty old women. He talked about the Bible and

the love of God, which doesn't mean much to people nowadays. Then he talked about the Constitution, and reverence for law—and we can see how that counts. People want what they want, and the law be hanged."

"So you wanted to improve the lecture?"

"A girl doesn't have the sort of experiences I've had without being made to think. For ten years or so I watched my father; and now there's an uncle down home, and several friends of the family. Up here there's Roger, and Evelyn, and Dick. So I keep asking myself: Why do people drink? And what can you say to them? What's the right way to go at it?"

"What *is* the right way?"

"The first thing is to begin when they're young. It's no good talking to grown people. If they're not drinkers, they don't need it, and if they are drinkers they laugh at you."

"Aren't Evelyn and Dick young enough?"

"No, they should have been taught when they were children. Somebody ought to have said to them: Look, this is what drinking does to you."

"If I say that," said Kip, "people point out the ones it hasn't seemed to hurt. Each one thinks he'll escape."

"You see a dozen people drinking, and out of the dozen, one will die a drunkard. Maybe it'll be you, and maybe the next one. You throw dice with death."

"Yes, but people want to gamble. That's their idea of a good time."

"They wouldn't, if you could bring it home to them. You've got to say: This is the kind of fool you look like; this is the kind you talk like."

Said Kip: "I only know this New York bunch, of course. They don't care what they look like, and they know that no one is listening to the way they talk. You try to separate them from their booze, and they make you a subject for wise-cracks."

"Well, people like that have to go on till they've had enough. Sooner or later, you know, every drunkard wants to stop. My father couldn't, but he would warn others. I can hardly bring myself to think about him, and the things I went through, up to the very end; yet I believe I could stand on a platform and tell a group of school children everything about it. I'd say: This is what I saw, with my own eyes. This is what liquor did to my father. They'd be interested in that, don't you think?"

Kip said, no longer smiling: "You tell them about your father, and I'll tell them about mine."

XII

Two or three days later Maggie May set out on her journey. Her cousin drove her to the station, and Roger would meet her in New York. Kip didn't even come to the house to see her off; they had had a parting the evening before, and agreed it would be better so, because they might shed tears, or look too much disturbed. They kissed a few more times, and plighted their troth; they would think about nothing but each other, until the time came for Kip to come to Pointe Chilcote for their wedding.

He was in a panic every time he contemplated the future; because, how could he expect Maggie May to come and live in a little brick cottage, as the wife of an employee? But Maggie May wouldn't hear that nonsense any more; she told him that if he mentioned it again she would think he didn't love her, and was trying to get out of it. So there was nothing for Kip to do but turn the management of his life over to a stronger will. It was amazing, what you found out about these women, who seemed so gentle and submissive; underneath, they were made of steel—and when they got going, they had the drive of hundred-ton locomotives!

Every day Kip got a love letter; Maggie May said she would write one in the morning, and one in the evening, so that he'd get one each day, in spite of the train! And then a telegram from Acadia, Louisiana, addressed, very decorously, to Mrs. Powhatan Tarleton: "Safe at home. All well. Greetings to our friends." Roger also had a telegram, and Mrs. Fessenden, so there was nothing to excite the suspicions of Mrs. Pollock, wife of the village druggist, who got reports of all Broadhaven telegrams from her maid, who "went out" with the village telegraph operator.

In due course came a letter from Pointe Chilcote, which Kip read with dizziness in the head. Maggie May had got home, and encountered all the glories which were hers by birthright—and still she was determined to come and experiment with "love in a cottage"! She had broken the news to her mother. Of course, all mothers were sorry when their daughters didn't "marry money," especially when there was so little in the Teche country, and so much in Wall Street. But Maggie May had put up to her mother the proposition, would she rather have a son-in-law who was poor

but dry, or one who was rich but wet? On the basis of this grim alternative, Kip Tarleton was the bridegroom-elect!

Of course Maggie May wrote to his mother also; and what could portray the happiness of two old ladies, who have concentrated their attention upon one darling boy, and who, after years of hoping, see him carried off by exactly the right girl? There was a Christmas atmosphere in the little brick cottage, two months ahead of time. And then a telephone call from Roger, who had received the news, and called up right away, so that an old friend would know he wasn't snobbish. "It's all right, kid," he said. "Of course there's nobody in the world good enough for Maggie May, but you're the nearest good enough—and she'll improve you." And then the wag added: "Of course she'd have to marry a teetotaler; and you are the only young one left in America!"

Then came Mrs. Fessenden for a visit: just before supper-time, when she knew Kip would be home. "Maggie May has written me the news," she said. "Of course I wasn't so much surprised, because we women have eyes, and young people don't hide as much from us as they think. You're very well suited to her, Kip"—yes, actually, she was calling him Kip!—"and I believe you'll both be happy. Certainly you have our best wishes."

"Thank you very much, Mrs. Fessenden," said Kip, blushing all over.

"You'll have to call me Cousin Jenny," she said, "since you're going to be a member of the family." Yes, he was to be a member of the family, and he couldn't get over his awe at it—for the power of wealth is a terrible thing, and the old Southern traditions have a hard time standing up to it!

"I've been figuring what to do with you," continued "Cousin Jenny." "Of course that's all nonsense about the ladies moving into the village. I'll put you in that cottage of Roger's—he won't use it, and there's room enough there, I think."

So Kip saw what it meant to be taken under the sheltering wing of privilege! They would live in that lovely house, which had seven rooms, and was in the part of the estate reserved to the guests! They began stammering their appreciation, mixed with embarrassment; Kip felt it his duty to say: "You know, Mrs.—Cousin Jenny—I didn't intend this to happen. I wouldn't have felt it was right to ask for it."

"I know," said Mrs. Fessenden, with a smile. "Maggie May

tells me she had to propose to you, so your position is perfectly honorable."

It wasn't going to be another scandal, then! The mistress of Broadhaven wouldn't let it be! She would take up this honorable young man, and make it plain to all their friends that it was no mésalliance, but a romance in the style of the Old South. "You'll have to have a vacation," she said. "You'll want to spend a little time at Pointe Chilcote, and then you'll want a honeymoon trip. I'll tell McCallum you're to have the month of January."

So that was that. And Kip thought to himself, how he wished he might be on hand, to see the superintendent's face when the news was broken to him!

CHAPTER TWELVE . . . . CRIME

I

IT WAS the end of the year 1922, and the senator from Ohio who had tried to play tricks upon the prohibition amendment had been president of the United States for nearly two years. He had brought with him to Washington a group of politicians known as the "Ohio gang," and had put them in high office, with result that the country was full of rumors of bribery and racketeering. Senators were charging that the oil men had bought the government and stolen the oil reserves of the navy. You read one day that it was so, and the next day that it was a slander, and the ordinary man hardly knew what to believe. Stories about two hundred thousand dollars worth of liberty bonds in a little black satchel sounded more like moving picture scenarios than like history lessons.

Kip Tarleton, who was going to get the thing he wanted most in all the world, found it especially hard to believe anything bad about his country. To be sure, he was a Democrat by inheritance, and inclined to assume the worst about Republican politicians; but he didn't think about them very much, because he was getting a lot of work done before he went on his honeymoon. He wouldn't have said that he would attend to his own affairs and let the country look out for itself—no, that would have been unpatriotic. But like most Americans, he would act upon that formula. He would look out for his employer's interests, earn his monthly check by honest work, and graft, crime, and scandal would pass him by.

But then, three days before Christmas, came the burglary of Broadhaven. The first news Kip had of it was a telephone call in the early hours of the morning. It was the butler at the mansion. "Mr. McCallum says please to come up right away. The house has been robbed."

"Robbed?"

"Somebody broke in during the night and carried off a lot of Mr. Fessenden's liquor."

Kip slipped into his overcoat, and ran out. It was before day-

light; the ground was frozen hard, and an icy wind was blowing off the water; the stars were beginning to pale in the sky, and he could see his breath as he ran. Up at the mansion there were flashlights on the gravelled drive, and a group of men examining the marks, which told a plain story: a heavy truck with double rear wheels had been driven up to a hundred yards or so of the house, where it had stopped, and four men had pushed it the rest of the way, so as not to make a sound. It had been backed up to one of the side entrances of the mansion, and this door had been "jimmied." The burglars had known where to go, evidently, for they had worked on the wall of the liquor cellar, and no other place. "This is an inside job," said McCallum.

There was a night-watchman, supposed to be on duty, an old fellow who had been a gardener on the place. He was nowhere in sight—until Kip finally discovered him, sound asleep in the servants' dining-room, with his head bowed over the table. Some one must have doped him, he declared; something had been put into the coffee he had drunk during the night. This might be true, or he might have been in league with the gang—who could say?

Anyhow, the burglars had drilled the plaster of the brick wall, taking out brick after brick, until there was space for a man to crawl through, and for a liquor case to be passed out. How many had been taken one could not say without a careful checking, but the cellar had an empty look, and McCallum said this stuff ran to money nowadays—some of it was worth two or three hundred dollars a case. Probably they had loaded the truck, and if so, they had got away with fifty or a hundred thousand dollars. To Kip, the naive one, it sounded like a fairy tale; he wouldn't have supposed there was that much liquor on the whole of Long Island.

Two constables came from Seaview, and later on several men from the sheriff's office, who made elaborate studies of the ground, and notes of the tire-treads, and took finger prints from the door and lock. They made a great show of questioning everybody on the place, and the superintendent and his assistant sat in at long conferences, telling what they knew about this employee and that, and having everything taken down by a stenographer. The servants were questioned, over and over, by this official and that; even the guests were not above suspicion by the gimlet-eyed sleuths—they could tell of more than one "inside job" that had been done by the help of "friends of the family." Kip was uncomfortably aware that he wasn't exempted, even by the fact that he was going to

marry a cousin of Mrs. Fessenden's. The sleuths were delving into his past and his present, and he felt like a criminal every time he saw them.

II

Mr. Fessenden came out from New York, and with the butler checked the contents of the cellar, according to a record in the butler's pantry, in which every case and bottle of this and that was entered like a library catalog. Would you believe it—Mr. Fessenden looked up "Chambéry" or "Moet and Chandon" the way other men looked up "Don Quixote" or "Troilus and Cressida"; every time the butler took out a bottle he had to look up a card, and check off one of the marks which represented bottles in stock. Down in the cellar, everything was ranged upon racks, and there was an alphabetical system which had won a prize offered by the Liquor Dealers' Association for the best model of a gentleman's cellar. Some time back when the banker had had a banquet tendered to him by his cronies, some one had recited a jingle which declared

His house on a hill
Is built on a still.

That story got into the newspapers, and one of the wags called "colyumists" wrote a new version, reading

His house on a hill
Was built on a still,
But burglars came and he didn't see 'um,
And now it's a mausoleum.

Of course there was excitement in all the newspapers. The "Evening Star" did not fail to mention that this was the mansion from which Evelyn, Countess Ensenada, had eloped earlier in the year. Another paper looked up the article about the "gentleman's wine-cellar," and quoted from it. The general agreement was that it was the high prices prevailing for first-class "stuff" at this Christmas season which was responsible for the daring crime. Genuine imported liquor was hardly to be had at any price, and it was a problem how demands for the New Year's celebration were to be met. The dealers would soon be offering "Banker Fessenden's stuff" all over New York; but nobody should be fooled by that,

because the liquor would be "cut" again and again before it reached the throats of consumers.

"Banker Fessenden" was in such a towering rage, for a day or two it looked as if he was going to be his own "sleuth"; he sat in at the questioning of his employees, and when Kip's turn came, he pressed the youth to tell him of any suspicious characters who had been seen about the place. Kip thought it would be better to talk to Mr. Fessenden privately about this matter. So, after the other "sleuths" had gone, he told the banker that his older son, Dick, had been patronizing a bootlegger, as a result of orders given to the butler by his parents, denying him access to the cellar and its contents. This bootlegger had come to the house at Thanksgiving time, looking for "Master Dick," and Kip had made note of the contents of his car. So "Banker Fessenden" set out to "grill" this undesirable citizen of the village, an Italian barber who was making gin in the bathtub of his home, and paying small tips to the village constables; poor Toni Galluppi was hounded to such an extent that he had to give up his bathtub industry, and go into the serious business of running liquor-trucks into New York.

Also, there was Taylor Tibbs. Kip and his mother and aunt had to tell everything they knew about Taylor from the day of his birth. Kip knew the Negro's weakness for liquor, good or bad, and knew that he would do petty stealing, but insisted that it was impossible he could have made a deal with real criminals. The police and detectives frightened Taylor nearly out of his wits, but got nothing of importance from him. Afterwards, at the banker's suggestion, Kip had a quiet talk with the man, and got bits of information which might or might not have significance. There were always people trying to get access to Broadhaven, or information about it, and more than one had questioned Taylor about this or that. They might have been newspaper reporters, or agents trying to get trade —who could say? Anyhow, the sleuths would run them down and cross-question them.

There was a new night-watchman now; no superannuated gardener, but a wide-awake ex-service man, carrying a shotgun having a magazine chamber loaded with eight buckshot shells. There was still some precious stuff in the cellar, and more was coming, said Banker Fessenden. In these times one couldn't depend upon police authorities, but had to look out for one's self. Kip, seeing that soldier pacing the driveway all night, got a new sense of the meaning of property, and the attitude of men of property towards a

hostile world. In the city, the Fessenden National had vaults with walls composed of twenty layers of the hardest steel, with charged electric wires buried in them, and also chambers of poison gas. Inside these walls was a corridor through which a man might walk, and an arrangement of mirrors so that a watchman could see all the way round from every spot. This watchman was locked in all night, and had to press a button every five minutes, to show he was awake. If he failed to press it, an alarm was rung in a private detective agency, and the watchman was immediately called on the telephone. That was the way rich people in New York felt about property!

III

Kip left for the South, and forgot the troubles of Broadhaven. The train speeding over the rails sang a song of rapture to him; every mile was one nearer to Maggie May, and he trembled, because it seemed impossible that fate could intend to let anybody stay so happy. To leave the chill winds and dirty slush of New York, and two days later step out into a country with roses in bloom—that was an experience which the rich had discovered, and a midwinter vacation had become part of American plutocratic life. But not many of these heliotropic travellers had a girl like Maggie May waiting for him at the end of the journey!

Lee Chilcote met Kip in New Orleans, and drove him the hundred miles over the new paved road of which everybody was so proud. Lee would talk about the road, and about the price of sugar, and about the oil scandals, and that rotten bunch of Republican politicians in Washington, a favorite topic for Southern Democrats. But Kip noticed that Lee would never say a word about the war, nor about his health, unless he was directly asked.

Kip had heard so much about Pointe Chilcote, from Roger and Jerry and Maggie May, that really it was like coming home. The live oaks covered with Spanish moss, and magnolias soon coming into bud, and bare fields soon to be green with young sugar cane, and the swamps, and the thickets grown ten or twelve feet high with cane, and swarms of mosquitoes, so that you had to live behind screens—he knew them all; likewise the house, of which a picture had stood on Roger's mantel. On the "gallery," as they called it, Maggie May was waiting, and her mother, and a visiting cousin, and an aunt, and servants coming on the run, so as not to miss any of the excitement of the white folks. Mrs. Chilcote kissed Kip on

both his cheeks—he was going to be her adopted son now; then the tears started to flow, because he had come to take the last of her children away from her.

Kip's good fortune was almost enough to turn his head. No longer was he a hotel-clerk, tied down to a desk; no longer was he an "outside servant," subject to a superintendent who begrudged every minute's time. No, he was the bridegroom-elect, and all the time was his, and Maggie May had nothing to think about but him. They could explore the bayous in a punt, or go sailing on the gulf; they could drive, and see the country, and picnic all day; they could sit on the gallery half the night, and listen to the strange liquid music of the mocking-birds. They were dissolved in a mist of happiness; the whole world smiled upon them, and lived over with them the dream of young love.

Then one morning they all put on stiff and proper clothing, and motored to the little private chapel on the estate. All the members of the big family were there, and the Reverend Mr. Cobbein in full canonicals, and the young couple stood up and promised to "love, honor, and obey." Maggie May, the old-fashioned girl, made no public fuss about the "obey"—but doubtless she made the usual mental reservations. Sister Lelia, the fashionable Mrs. Pakenham of New Orleans, sang a song in French, and they went back to the house and had a merry wedding breakfast, after which Maggie May and Kip went upstairs and changed their clothes, and their baggage was stowed in a little sport-car which was a present from Lee.

They were going to motor to Florida, and then up to New York, taking their time and seeing the sights. But first there had to be long partings, with all the ladies shedding tears, and leaving messages, and promising to write. When they climbed in, they were covered with showers of rice, and old slippers—nobody knew why they threw rice and old slippers at bridal couples, but it was done, and the first task of the pair, as soon as they had got away, was to get out and cut the cow-bell from the rear bumper, and throw slippers and shoes from the baggage, and brush the last grain of rice from their clothing, so that their secret might not be betrayed to bellboys and clerks at the hotels where they stopped.

IV

Three weeks later they were back in Broadhaven, settled in that wonderful seven-room cottage, on the side of the estate reserved to

the guests. The two old ladies had used the month to get settled in the new home—and what perfectly enraptured old ladies they were, with two darlings to watch over instead of one! Such marvellous housekeepers, preparing good Southern meals with hot bread every day, and keeping the place so that a speck of dust was not to be discovered with a magnifying glass! They would leave nothing for Maggie May to do—she must go up to the mansion and be the lady as before, so as not to feel any loss of social status through having married an employee. They fussed over that lovely bride and cherished her as if she had been a piece of Dresden china.

One of the first things Kip learned when he got home was that the burglars had been caught. Mr. Fessenden, distrusting the local police, had employed a detective agency in New York, and provided them with funds for the paying of informers. They had found several bottles of the bankers' best cognac being offered for sale to one of the fashionable "speakeasies" in New York, and they had traced the seller, and located part of the precious cargo; three men were in jail in New York, and one more in the county jail.

It had been an "inside job," as McCallum had said. The man in the county jail was the butler's assistant, the "first footman," as he was technically known; an ordinary young fellow, born and raised in the neighborhood, the son of an old servant—it gave you a start to realize that such a man would sell you out, and admit New York gangsters into your home! He didn't look like a criminal; he had frank-appearing blue eyes and carroty hair, and had worked in your home and taken your orders patiently, every day for nearly five years; and now here he was behind bars, admitting all that he had done. A girl had got hold of him, and to get money for her he had listened to the whispers of crooks from the city. Just such a story as you saw in the movies, and didn't believe!

The odd part was, the fellow had turned ugly, and insisted that he was no worse than the people he had conspired to rob! They were breaking the law all the time, and why should he obey it? Mr. Fessenden had ordered a lot of brandy off one of the ships that lay out at sea, and had had it brought into his own harbor—the "first footman" knew, because he had helped to unload the stuff, and to catalog it in the prize card-system! When the master wanted a case of liquor for his parties in New York, he didn't think a thing of telling his servants to carry it down to the yacht, or to stow it in the trunk behind his limousine. Master Dick bought stuff from bootleggers, and carried it all over the island to petting parties, and

"whoopees" he had with his friends. The rich expected their servants to see all that, and go on obeying orders, and living like monks!

No, said Joe Ferris—that was his name—he wasn't anybody's sucker, and he wasn't going to Sing Sing for a burglary job. The police had him, and they might keep him a while, and beat him up—he charged that they had already done so; but they couldn't kill him, and sooner or later he'd have his day in court, and he'd tell the newspapers all he knew about the law-breaking rich of Long Island. More than that, he'd tell about the police. He hadn't lived here all his life for nothing. He knew how much Toni Galluppi, the barber who made bathtub gin, had paid to the local constables, and he knew half a dozen others who were in the business, and where you could get the stuff—and like as not you'd find the police magistrate having a bracer after a hard day in court, sending poor men to jail. Joe Ferris knew that the sheriff was getting chunks of money from the trucks that were loading up with liquor every night, in all the coves and harbors at this far end of the island. All the politicians were in the graft, and by God, he wasn't to be the goat. To protect himself, he had already written out what he knew, and turned it over to a local preacher who was threatening trouble for the liquor-ring.

V

So there was a pretty kettle of mash; or, as you might say, a bathtub full of gin and bitters, fermenting and brewing trouble for a great banker. Mr. Fessenden, whom Kip discovered to be both irritable and obstinate, was bound that the scoundrel should be punished to the limit; but the constables and sheriff and county attorney were rumored to be far from happy over the prospect. Broadhaven and the village buzzed with gossip about the situation; young Ferris was known to everybody, his family lived there, his brother was on the war-path because of the alleged "beating up." Strange as it might seem, there was no little sympathy for the prisoner; there was a sort of embryo peasant revolt against the landlord, and there were even a couple of village radicals who said that a good burglar was better than a bad banker. Ferris's mother was a churchwoman, and diligently spread the idea that the boy's fall was due to the bad example set by his master; many of the church crowd took up that notion, and it worried the politicians, even if it didn't worry the master.

This incident was a source of much education for Kip Tarleton. He had taken it for granted that criminals were what they were because there was something inherently bad in them; he thought of them as sinister beings, remote, dangerous, and different from himself; certainly not as fellows with frank-appearing blue eyes and carroty hair, who had waited on him for years, and spoken to him pleasantly. But here Joe Ferris stood to get several years in the state penitentiary—and were there many more like him "up the river"?

You wondered about all sorts of things connected with crime, and the causes of it, and the grades and degrees of men's responsibility. What were you going to think about rich men who made a mockery of the law? What were you to think about your own position, as employee of such a master, and about your honeymoon cottage, and your monthly salary, recently increased, and your social position, about which you tried not to be proud? You might tell yourself that you earned your money by honest work; but were you sure the man who paid you had done the same? And how many stages from corruption did money have to go before it became purified?

Also, there was the problem of your duty as a citizen, confronted with the presence of law-breaking and graft all about you. Was it enough to stuff cotton in your ears when you went to bed, and refuse to hear the rumble of the liquor-trucks on their way to New York? When you went for a stroll with your bride on a still evening in early spring, should you pretend not to see the signals of the rum-runners, winking here and there out on the water—or should you pretend that you thought they were "lightning-bugs"? If each individual citizen told himself it was none of his affair, what would be the end of it, and how far off would the end be? Kip and Maggie May discussed this problem on many a spring evening when they might have been making love; some of the things they said could have been taken for disloyalty to their job, and to that kind Cousin Jenny who had taken such pains to make them comfortable.

VI

The affair of the burglary hung fire for two or three months, during which Joe Ferris stayed in jail, and the tongues of rumor wagged busily. Kip and Maggie May got the village gossip through Mrs. McCallum and her cronies, and the gossip of the mansion

from Mrs. Fessenden and Evelyn, and from Roger Chilcote, who came out a couple of times for a week-end, and met the smart crowd at the country club, and told Kip amusing stories. There had been regular deputations of frightened politicians and merchants, appealing to Richard Fessenden to let the matter drop; the neighborhood couldn't stand the "stink" that would be stirred up by a court case having to do with liquor. A few miles offshore lay the ships which composed "Rum Row"; and if Long Island was climbing out of the "hard times," it was mainly on the basis of the tribute levied on smuggled "wet goods"—a sort of local and super-legal excise tax, such as the barons of the middle ages had laid upon merchant caravans passing through their territory. "Did you know that's how the Kaiser's family got their name?" said Roger, with his chuckle of mischief. "Hohenzollern means 'high-taxers.'"

The time came when Banker Fessenden's golf cronies were tackling him on the course, pointing out the danger of letting out facts that would stir up the "church element." This had come to be a term of extreme opprobrium with the business men at the country club; they were beginning to realize what a menace to the country was offered by persons who went to church on Sunday mornings instead of playing golf, and who served lemonade and cake at their parties instead of gin and bitters. At all hazards one must avoid "stirring them up," and it was a patriotic duty that Fessenden owed, to give his consent to the dropping of the case against Ferris. As for the three crooks from New York, of course that was different; the police had other things on them, and they could be sent up for another crime. So finally the stubborn banker gave way, and his friends slapped him on the back and told him he was a good fellow, and offered him a share of something special which they had in their locker, so fresh off the boat that you could see the stains of sea-water on the label.

There was another aspect of this burglary which gave enormous glee to Roger Chilcote; the fact that the government wouldn't let Richard Fessenden have his stolen liquor back! The Federal authorities had got hold of the precious cache, and were preparing to issue a permit for the transporting of it back to its original place; but then the discovery was made that the seals had been removed and the liquor "cut." So, under the regulations, it was no longer the same liquor, and would not be returned to its former owner, but would be destroyed!

This affair served both Roger and Jerry as a text for many ser-

mons upon the absurdity of prohibition. This was what you got when you passed a law attempting to regulate men's morals! Such a law was really no law, but usurpation and tyranny; it could not be enforced, and the officials charged with enforcing it were the first to break it. Indeed, it was every citizen's duty to break such a law as much as possible, because the sooner it was discredited, the sooner it would be repealed. Roger and Jerry labored heroically at this social duty; also, they applied their trained wits to the task of pouring ridicule upon the law, among themselves, and in all that they wrote for the public.

Kip was the only man they knew who was a victim of wowser-mania, so he had to endure the concentrated fire of a battery of heavy guns, and was blasted and blown up and pulverized as many times as one of the forts at Verdun. Any choice anecdote that Roger came upon, illustrating the breakdown of the Volstead act, he would treasure up and unload the next time he met his brother-in-law. If it was proposed to take a sail, he would say: "Let's go out and have a look at the rum fleet." If it was proposed to go driving, he would say: "No, the traffic is too heavy—too many cars of bootleggers."

Kip took this good-naturedly, and without much argument in reply. He knew his brother-in-law from of old; Roger would make jokes about Kip's refusal to drink, but it would not do for Kip to make jokes about Roger's drinking. It was all right for a famous poet to declare that it was the aim of his life to get his proper young brother-in-law properly "stewed," or "soused," or "pie-eyed," or "squiffy"; and to tell Kip the glorious sensations he was missing, by refusing to join the Wet Parade. But it would not do for Kip to mention the evidence of inglorious sensations which Roger had given him on various occasions: for example, the time at a studio party when Roger had experienced the sensations of a "bow-wow," and had crawled around on his hands and knees and barked; or the time in the Tarleton House when Roger had wept for an hour because nobody loved him; or the time, just recently, when he had taken a bootlegger's word for a case of gin, and had had to send a hurry call for a physician with a stomach-pump.

VII

Roger's play had gone into rehearsal the previous autumn, and had run into a hitch; the leading lady had broken down in the midst

of affairs, declaring that she couldn't play such a part, it was too horrible. Even the hard-boiled manager had got what he called "cold feet," and tried to persuade Roger to modify the closing scenes. Roger had stood by his artistic formula, according to which the greatness of an art-work was measured by its painfulness; the production had been stopped, and the playwright had hunted up another manager, and signed another contract for the following fall. In the meantime, he was going to spend the summer "doing" Europe with Eileen Pinchon. The young intellectuals of America were making a practical protest against "Volsteadism" by spending all their spare time and money abroad.

Roger and Eileen motored out one evening, and had dinner in the seven-room cottage which for a year or so had been Roger's home. The two old ladies prepared a meal with fried spring chicken and "beaten biscuits" and other Southern delicacies; they were greatly excited by the occasion, and politely pretended to have no idea of any improper relationship between the poet and his lovely companion. This delicate pastel blonde who appeared to have tripped out of a French water-color, evidently adored Roger more than was good for him, and tried with desperate eagerness to please his sister and her family. Women have ways of finding out about each other, and Maggie May told Kip, after this visit, that it was exactly as she had expected—Eileen was hoping that Roger would marry her, but afraid to drop any hint, because of the poet's impatience of "chains."

The couple went away to Europe; and Roger's war on "Volsteadism" took the form of a series of picture postcards from the showplaces of the world. He would choose pictures of wine-cellars piled with huge casks, and bier stubes with rows of steins, and paintings of fat monks drinking, and every sort of Bacchic and unpuritan scene. "The product of these vineyards will appear off the coast of Long Island next Christmas," he would write. Or: "These instruments of torture were devised for wowsers." Or perhaps: "We have entered a contest with the topers of this town, and Eileen is ahead by three gallons." Now and then his ebullitions would require more space than a postcard—as when he got to Munich, and established contact with the real thing in beer. All his life Roger had been hearing about it, but the actuality was beyond imagining, and brought forth a prose poem—

"In Sligo the Irish whiskey made me sick. In Dublin the famous Guinness Stout turned me queasy. In London the brandy and soda

left me indifferent. The wine-cellars of Paris were ransacked for bottles of the comet year to tempt my jaded palate. Even the far-famed Lacrima Christi which I guzzled on its native Vesuvian slopes left my temperature quite unsquizzled. All were mere trifles, compared with this brown and moist perfection, a kind of mother's milk drawn from some benignant deity who knows what is good for us! As you know, I abhor eloquence, but my tongue babbles on this subject of Munich beer. I would my dishes could be scrubbed in it, my bathtubs filled with it, yea, verily, that the heavens could rain brown beer upon the flowers, and flood the city gutters with its translucent fluid. They have a song here which says: 'The heavenly stuff begins to work—pour it in!'"

VIII

There was a "little stranger" on the way to the Tarleton family; and what a fluttering in that dovecote when the news became known! Kip was shoved to one side; his part was done now, and it was a woman's affair. Maggie May was tended and cherished, and delicacies were prepared for her to eat with a double purpose. The arrival was expected in the winter-time, so a great deal of clothing would be necessary; for reasons known to ladies, it was necessary for each and every garment to be embroidered with roses of pink silk, or perhaps with violets of violet silk. While such "fancy work" was being done, the ladies sat about and exchanged reminiscences, and oddly enough Aunt Sue was just as much an authority as Kip's mother.

The barriers which difference of station had set up between the Tarleton and Fessenden families were now pretty well broken down. The old lady pensioners came over at all hours, and sat and gossiped; Mrs. Fessenden came now and then, and invited the Tarleton ladies to a tea-party at the mansion, at which there was no end of fluttering, and talk about intimate affairs. It was only when Mr. Fessenden was expected that the Tarleton ladies kept out of the way; the pensioners did the same—for the master was irritable, and resented his wife's habit of cluttering up the place with superfluous people. They were all trying to get her money, he insisted, and just now money was scarce, and he threatened a house-cleaning.

Twenty-two years ago Genevieve Talbot, of Mobile, Alabama, had been a pupil at a "finishing school" in New York, being trained in the ways of expensive elegance. One of the features of school

life had been afternoon tea-parties to which "eligible" men were invited; the expected happened now and then, and each time it was an advertisement for the school, and a reason for parents with daughters to pay the high prices charged. So Genevieve had met the heir of Broadhaven, a great "catch," and the fact that he was twenty years older than she made no difference; the fact that he had a string of scandals attached to his name, came to her merely as a rumor. His family was anxious to find a proper wife for him, and "Jenny's" parents were concerned about four younger sisters coming on; so there were negotiations behind the scenes, and the girl was pushed into the affair before she had time to make up her own mind.

Now here she was, an unhappy woman, in spite of the fact that she had a palace, and a thousand acres, and a dozen motor-cars, and the resources of a trust company and a national bank behind her. Her love-life had been over and done with quickly; nor had she been brought up in the aristocratic tradition, which allows a woman to marry for reasons of state, and then find diversion in what is called "romance." She had tried to live her life in her children, but had made a mess of that, because she was too indulgent, and powerless to stand out against the pressure of her environment. Children brought up in a home with many servants rarely learn to do things for themselves, and are apt to be fastidious and exacting. Here were the young Fessendens, all three discontented, wrangling with each other, and hating their father, whose attempts at discipline failed because he was selfish, and never troubled to understand them or their needs.

Kip was brought into relations with these young people, because the mother in her desperation turned to anybody who was at hand. Dick, the eldest, had his mother's good heart, but also her inability to say no to people. His companions were youths whose parents were playing at the country club, and thought they had done their duty when they turned them over to servants and tutors, or sent them to expensive boarding-schools. The young people had their own cars, and were racing about at all hours of the day and night; they had access to their parents' liquor-cellars, or else had bootleggers whose tales they believed, exactly like the adults. They were growing up in an atmosphere of postwar cynicism—the intellectual heirs of Jerry Tyler and Roger Chilcote, and a swarm of writers who made mockery of every idea of self-control.

So it became Kip's duty, not as assistant superintendent of the

estate, but as distant relative and confidential friend, to be awakened at two o'clock of a summer's morning, and asked to dress in a hurry and dash off to a hospital where Dick was lying with a nose split open, from having been hurled through the windshield of his car; he had been drunk, and had hit another car, and it was necessary to pay a sum to keep him from being prosecuted. Not long afterwards Kip had to be called again, this time to a road-house, where Dick had been lured into a bedroom with a girl who was another man's wife, or claimed to be, and was being held prisoner by an irate husband. It was an old game, but Kip had to remember the newspapers, and the use they would make of such a story; he paid out the five hundred dollars which Mrs. Fessenden had entrusted to him. Afterwards it was his job to brace the boy up, and help him face his parents. Kip didn't actually see the elder Fessenden kick his son out of the room, but he heard the son tell about it, with many details concerning his father's way of life, and what the hell right did he have to make a fuss?

Also, Evelyn, who did a few months' penance for her sins, and then got restless and returned to the country club life. Of course she was notorious now, and people pointed her out, referring to her mockingly as "Countess." She knew it, and became outwardly defiant, and secretly anxious to find a husband. Her mother tried to help her by inviting young people to the house and entertaining them. But it was difficult, because so few of the younger set would come unless liquor was provided, and then they would assume no responsibility for the consequences. One sweet young thing "passed out" completely before dinner, and had to be carried upstairs and put to bed. Nor was that supposed to be a matter for anything but laughter; you weren't expected to stop inviting her to your home, nor should you even speak to her parents about it.

There were men willing to marry a millionaire's daughter, and finally Evelyn settled upon a promising young stockbroker by the name of Ralston, a good-looking and aggressive product of football and fraternity life, able to take care of himself in a hard-boiled world. He and his wife made a team, and Kip got an inside view of a new "racket." The "market" was coming back, and a stockbroker "worked" his friends for orders; he gave them "tips," and if they made money they allowed him a share—while if they lost, they suspected him of having double-crossed them. In this world of the rich, and of parasites and grafters swarming about the rich, all human relationships were poisoned. The time came when poor

Cousin Jenny broke down in the presence of Kip's mother, and wept, saying that she couldn't stand this life, and wished she had gone into a convent.

IX

When things like these happened, Kip and Maggie May would draw back into their well-sheltered little nest. They could not heal the sorrows of the world, nor the weaknesses of human beings which caused them; they could only see to it that in their own corner there was kindness and consideration. Never would they fall prey to greed, and wreck the happiness of themselves and others, trying to pile up a fortune. When they had their child, they would teach it hard work and self-control, and not let it grow up into a torment to itself and its parents. They had love in their home, a magic talisman to protect them from the evils that raged outside.

So they told themselves: until one day the superintendent came into the little office where the books and letter-files were kept, and carefully shut the door behind him, and began: "Tarleton, I have some orders from the boss."

"Yes, sir?" said Kip.

"There is to be some work done here at night, and you and I have nowt to do with it. There'll be a night superintendent, as ye might say, and that is Wallins, the watchman."

"What is the work?" Kip asked.

"I was not told, and I got the impression that the less I asked, the better it would be for me."

"I suppose Mr. Fessenden intends to bring in some more liquor," ventured Kip.

"I was told to tell ye to mind yer own affairs, and no more than that."

"All right," said Kip, "I'm a good sleeper."

"Ye're in luck," said McCallum, dryly. There was a twinkle in his bright blue eyes.

Kip told his wife about it, and the little household went to sleep at its usual moral hour of eleven o'clock, and banished curiosity from its mind. But the rest of Broadhaven would not have it so; somebody must have been spying, for in the course of two or three days the place was like a hornets' nest with gossip. It was all over the village, the greatest scandal in the memory of the oldest inhabitant: "Old Master Dick," as the earlier generation called him, had gone into the rum-running business!

What else could you make of it? Every night a motor-launch stole into the little harbor of the estate, and at the same hour a big truck came speeding into the place, and stopped at the pier, and loaded up, and sped away again. You could hear the rumble of it, coming and going; every morning, so said the gossips, you could see the tracks of it in the gravelled drive. You could also pick up such things as bits of gunny-sack, a piece broken from a liquor case, and once a broken bottle. The boatman had had to clean this up, and had left a note on the pier: "Please leave a full bottle!" The runners had granted the request—but Wallins, the night-watchman, had taken possession of the gift, and shared it with a girl in the village. Could you imagine such goings on?

X

It happened that Roger Chilcote came home from Europe about that time, and came out to lunch at Broadhaven, and told his numerous adventures. Kip found a chance to take him for a stroll, and revealed his perplexity and dismay. Roger thought it was the funniest thing he had ever run across; he laughed so that he had to lean on Kip. Of all persons in the world—this pious and proper young wowser—to find himself assistant superintendent of a smuggling enterprise! Some mischievous person must have planned it, said Roger; impossible to attribute such a sense of humor to Providence!

"Don't forget, Roger," said Kip, "your sister is in it, too."

So the playwright had to become serious. "It's just what I told you, kid. You had your way, and passed this silly law, and now you expect people to take it seriously, and they just won't, that's all."

"But to use one's home for such a purpose, Roger!"

"Well, that's a question of taste, and the Fessendens have never been long on that quality. Their progenitor was a butcher, and I suppose he handed down his manners, along with the estate."

"But, joking aside, Roger, how can you explain the thing?"

The other thought it over. "I suppose it's a measure of how hard up Fessenden is. I heard a rumor, before I left New York, that the trust company was nearly on the rocks; I didn't mention it, because it's not the sort of thing to be talked about. But you know how it is, Kip, these big fellows have ways to lend themselves money from their own banks; it's against the law, but they get around it, and it's all right until the bank gets into trouble; then it makes a

deuce of a mess. I suppose the death of the German mark has put Fessenden up against it, and he's looking for a way out."

"Is there so much money in this smuggling business, Roger?"

"Never anything like it, I'm told. It takes one of these rum-ships about six weeks to make a round trip, and the profit is several hundred percent. Where else can an investor find such a snap?"

"I knew that bootleggers were in it, and gangsters; but I didn't suppose that a gentleman—a banker like Mr. Fessenden, with a reputation——"

"Forget it, kid!" said Roger. "It's time you moralists waked up, and learned something about the world you live in. You have outlawed one of America's big industries, and it's not a matter for bootleggers and gangsters, but for capital. Out there"—the speaker waved his hand towards the ocean—"you can see the tops of a dozen ships; if you took a speed-boat and went down the line from Cape Cod to the Chesapeake, you'd see two or three hundred. I suppose, going and coming, there are a thousand vessels in the trade; and all these operations have to be financed, the ships have to be rented, the crews paid, and the cargoes purchased. Our biggest bankers are in it, and they're cleaning up millions every week."

"And using their homes for landing-places?"

"Well, Fessenden happens to have a harbor all made to order, and I suppose the temptation is too great. Several launches have gone ashore recently, and the government men got the stuff. Probably Fessenden met some losses, and couldn't stand it."

"It's pretty hard on his family," ventured Kip.

"Not so hard as if the Fessenden Trust and the Fessenden National were to go on the rocks, and the president were sent up the river for embezzlement, or misappropriation, or whatever it would be. The family's always ready to spend the old man's money, so they'll have to keep their mouth shut while he makes it."

XI

Roger was too polite to say that Kip and Maggie May were also spending the old man's money, and would have to keep their mouth shut while he made it. But that was the aspect of the matter which the young couple could not get out of their minds. A cruel jest for fate to play upon two self-righteous and self-satisfied young wowsers, living in their little love-nest, sheltered and comfortable—and now suddenly discovering that their monthly pay-check came

out of the profits of rum-running! Their living depended upon their skill in shutting their eyes to smuggling operations! What if they should happen to open their eyes some night, and see the lights of the big truck flashing against the drawn shades? What if they were wakened by the rumble of trucks at forty miles an hour past their door? What if a broken bottle should be found upon their neatly kept front lawn, reserved for guests, and for the social equals of a fashionable family?

What was the duty of a citizen when he had knowledge of the commission of crime? He was supposed to report it to the police, wasn't he? But how if the police already knew it, as well as, or better than, the citizen? When the police were abetting the crime, and sharing in the profits of it—what then? Was it the duty of the citizen to compel the police to enforce the law? And how did that duty weigh against his duty to an employer who paid him a good salary at the end of each month, and furnished him with a seven-room brick cottage, and gas and electricity, and fruit and vegetables, and milk and butter and eggs? To say nothing of his duty to an employer's wife who was a relative by marriage, and furnished him and his wife with tea-parties, and social equality, and kindness, and a heaped-up basket at Christmas, and numerous other favors not nominated in the bond!

The four members of the Tarleton family attended the Episcopal church in Seaview, an institution of refinement and good breeding; the rector was no wowser, but a man of the world, who didn't mind having a wee drop or two when he went calling on his parishioners of the country club set. But it was otherwise with the McCallums, who belonged to the Presbyterian church, many of whose members wore the white ribbon of the temperance enthusiasts. Here was an ethical problem indeed, and a social problem! Could a woman belong to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union while her husband got his salary for superintending a rum-smugglers' rendezvous? Could her daughters belong to the Epworth League, and face the sneers of the other children, and questions about the gangsters from New York who visited their home at night?

The village was torn to pieces over this issue. The "church element" swarmed like angry hornets, and never had they been so dangerous. Anonymous letters were written to the village constable, and to the sheriff's office, and the county prosecutor; when these had no effect, there were secret meetings of righteous conspirators in various homes. There was a certain Mrs. Doaks, who was of

the Methodist persuasion, and a perfect picture of a "wowser," according to the caricatures in the New York papers: lean, stringy, shrill of voice, and wholly devoid of feminine charms. Her husband was a railroad engineer, so she was one of those in the village who were not dependent upon favors from Broadhaven. She could afford to speak out, and to scold the others for cowardice and subservience; she did so, and made herself the leader of a new peasant revolt, in the name of law and order, as well as of the Lord and His Commandments.

Before long there was a deputation of these church people, calling upon the county officials—who placed their hands upon their hearts, and solemnly swore that the law and the Constitution were sacred things to them. They had earnestly sought evidence of law-breaking, but in vain. If valid evidence were brought to them, they would act upon it.

So the "church element" went away, discussing the question of how they could get "valid" evidence. It was difficult to figure out, for the reason that Broadhaven was private property, and it was well known that Wallins carried a repeating shotgun, and had been ordered to use it. When the trucks came off the property onto the state highway, they were traveling at high speed, and were guarded by three or four men, who were expecting "hijackers," and might fail to recognize the credentials of servants of the Lord.

It so happened that at this time the legislature of the great Empire State was in process of repealing the prohibition enforcement act, thus leaving the problem up to the Federal government alone. So the deputation betook themselves to New York City, and interviewed an official of the "Prohibition Unit," as the Federal enforcement service was then called. This official passed them on the customs authorities—it being a case of smuggling. The customs official passed them on to the coast-guard—since the smuggling was done from "Rum Row." The enforcement of the law was thus conveniently divided up, so that each of several departments might "pass the buck."

The church people finally got a promise that an effort would be made to obtain evidence of illegal proceedings at Broadhaven. When they came back a month later, they were told that efforts had been made, but that on the nights when Federal agents had watched the place, no law-breaking had been apparent. Did the members of the deputation have evidence themselves? They replied that it was common knowledge; but to this the polite official replied that unfor-

tunately common knowledge was not evidence in a court of law. To make a case under the Volstead act, it would be necessary for some one to testify that he had seen the liquor being "transported," and that he had sampled it, and ascertained that it really was liquor, and not, say, ginger ale, or beer of less than one-half of one percent alcoholic content.

XII

Kip heard about these episodes, for the gossip was all over the place. When he happened to be in the city, and had lunch with Jerry Tyler, he learned still more. The smart and cynical editor explained that the non-enforcement of the Volstead act had become one of the principal sources of revenue of the "Ohio gang," which still controlled in Washington, in spite of all scandals and exposures. When you wanted to set up in bootlegging and rum-running on a large scale, you paid a visit to the national capital, and interviewed a certain friend of the Attorney-General, who had an office in a government building, though he did no government work. You told him what you wanted, and the price was named. But you didn't pay him money—oh, no, they were not so naive as that. You made a secret visit to a "little green house on K Street," which was rigged up like a fortress in the world war, and there you gave a password, and were admitted to a room which had a small table in the center, and on the table a glass bowl such as gold-fish are kept in. Into that bowl you dropped your thousand dollar bills, one at a time, while an eye watched you through a small hole in a curtain. There were millions of dollars' worth of liberty bonds buried in the basement of that little green house on K Street; the property of members of the gang, which included more than one cabinet member. It was even said that several hundred thousand dollars of these bonds had been placed in a safe deposit box for President Harding, though he wasn't supposed to know where they came from; he was an old booze-fighter, and a poker-expert—according to the editor of the "Gothamite"—and had a young girl mistress, who had borne him a child, and came to visit him now and then in a little room in the basement of the White House.

Of course Kip wouldn't believe anything like that; Kip was a good, patriotic American, and knew it was all just the filthy gossip of the New York literary gang. When he hinted something like that, Jerry smiled patronizingly and said: "I suppose I couldn't

even get you to believe that Richard Fessenden was a heavy contributor to the campaign fund which elected President Harding!"

"I might believe that," admitted Kip. "Why not?"

"And what do you suppose he put it up for? Because Harding looks like a Roman senator, and makes speeches like a nigger preacher?"

No, said Jerry, at the time of the nomination of the senator from Ohio, everybody had known that the prohibition amendment was going into effect, and the Republican politicians had known who was going into the business of rum-running, and who was going to put up the capital. They had chosen for President a man who knew good liquor when he tasted it, and knew his friends and backers, and stood by them. So now the master of Broadhaven was immune to interference, or to punishment for anything he might do, up to and including murder. The wowsers in the village of Seaview might as well go out and spit against a hurricane, as try to stop the movement of liquor into New York.

"It's what I told you from the beginning, Kip; it's an idiot's law, and nobody but an idiot would expect it to be enforced. If you really enforced it, you'd cause a revolution; the business men would turn out a government that interfered with them to such an extent."

"There's a lot of business men backing the law, Jerry."

"I know; they find it convenient to have their workingmen turn up sober on Monday morning. They figure they can pay the price for their own liquor, while their workers have to do without. That's an aspect of prohibition that the people must understand—it's class legislation, affecting the poor, and sparing the rich." The editor's heavy, dark eyebrows frowned with sudden and unaccustomed moral indignation over this.

"We have a lot of that sort of legislation," ventured Kip.

"Maybe so; but it was never so plain as in this case."

"Well, I'll tell you," said the younger man. "If you fix it up so that the rich get drunk while the poor stay sober, you may have another kind of revolution in this country—one that the business men won't like so well."

XIII

Kip would take these arguments home to his wife, and they would go over them, and pick them to pieces, and discuss them from every point of view. It was all so different from what they had expected,

in the days when they had imagined prohibition. It was extremely depressing, and called for moral efforts on the part of two young wowsers.

There was a curious difference of temperament between Kip and Maggie May in these matters. Kip was diffident and given to wondering about his own rightness. It was hard for him to differ with two such brilliant men as Jerry Tyler and Roger Chilcote, and he would come away from his arguments full of doubts and anxieties. Could it be that he was wrong in his idea of banning liquor from the world? Could it be that there was anything good about it; that it was necessary, say to poets and geniuses, and people like that, whom Kip didn't understand very well? Could it be that when you forbade people to do something, they forthwith fell into a rage of determination, and did that thing harder than ever?

It troubled Kip to be different from people; he liked to like his friends, and to have them like him; he had always been intensely uncomfortable when refusing to be sociable. He observed those who drank, and those who refused to drink, and was puzzled because so often he preferred the former. For example, when he went to New York, he wanted to have lunch with Jerry or Roger; but when he went to Seaview, it never occurred to him to have lunch with Mrs. Doaks, the leader of the temperance forces. He didn't like being scolded himself, and didn't like scolding as a habit. There was something fundamentally unpleasant about the business of telling other people how to live!

Yet, what were you going to do? If you saw a man about to put his foot into a bear-trap, you would warn him; you wouldn't stop to think about personal charm, or even politeness, in such an emergency. But it was supposed to be the social convention that you must watch people putting their foot into the trap of alcoholism, and act as if you had no idea of the consequences; as if you had never seen a man make a fool of himself, and then, later on, a slave of himself, a physical, mental, and moral ruin. Kip would comply with the law of good manners to the extent of holding his tongue, but he couldn't hold his face, and people would see his face, and be irritated by it, and then Kip would go away and be irritated by himself. Yes, he was a Puritan and a bluenose, and would never be the life of a party, like Roger or Jerry!

Maggie May would note this weakness, and scold him for it. This was the difference between them—not at all what you would expect from a Southern girl, who seemed so gentle, quiet, and sub-

missive. When you got to know her, you discovered that there was a volcano inside her, and now and then it would burst forth with a roar and a glare of flames. Maggie May was a sure-enough wowser, and not even the example of the lean and shrewish Mrs. Doaks could frighten her from her destiny. She had come to loathe drinking, and drinking people, and had taken to saying so, in a way that was scarcely "ladylike." She held Jerry Tyler in part to blame for her brother's drinking, and told him this, with such emphasis as to spoil the pleasure of Jerry and his brilliant and worldly wife on their first visit to Broadhaven. She even argued with Cousin Jenny about permitting liquor to be served in her home, thus setting an example which was ruining her children.

Maggie May had got acquainted with Mrs. Doaks and the rest of the "church element" in the village, and had brought home several pamphlets dealing with the liquor problem. A queer sort of reading matter for an expectant young mother! Here were the assembled old ladies begging her to keep her mind cheerful—and she absorbed in a treatise on the physiological effects of ethyl alcohol! She even got from the public library a history of the prohibition movement, and would be studying that when she was supposed to be taking a nap! Kip would protest, and she would tell him that the way for her to find peace of mind was to know how to answer Jerry and Roger, and the other convivial persons of her acquaintance. Was it true that, as they were so fond of asserting, the cause of temperance had been steadily prospering in the United States, until the fool prohibition law had ruined it all? No, it was about as far from the truth as any convivial person could get! Here were the statistics, showing that the per capita consumption of alcohol had been increasing right along, every year in the entire history of the United States, until the war and war-prohibition!

You needed to know things like that, in order to be sure of your faith, and to defend it against enemies. The movement for liquor control was more than a century old in our country, and in those years men had learned a great deal, and it was a shame to be ignorant of it. You would hear people arguing that the way to temperance was by education—individual reform as opposed to state action and the outlawry of liquor. Well, here were our great-grandmothers, starting crusades, conducting revival meetings, and getting people to sign pledges; that was individual reform, wasn't it? And yet the per capita consumption of alcohol had continued to increase! By kneeling in the streets in front of saloons, they would succeed in

closing all the saloons in a town—and then, in a year or two, there would be more saloons in that town than ever!

Or take the idea of having the government go into the liquor business, which was the program of "wets" who said they didn't want the saloon back. It was a fact that this plan had been tried out in South Carolina, and proved worse than no plan at all. Or "local option," the idea of having each state regulate its own affairs; that sounded liberal, and the New York "liberals" were strong for it—mostly because of their comfortable certainty that their own state would vote wet. Men who declared that national prohibition couldn't be enforced, because the United States had so many thousand miles of coast-line to guard, would propose as their remedy to divide wet states from dry—and thus multiply by ten or twenty the boundaries to be guarded! They would imagine Nevada wet and California dry, and the latter state patroling a six hundred mile border, with a guard at every desert trail and mountain pass. They would imagine Illinois wet and Missouri dry, with speedboats guarding some four hundred miles of the Mississippi river all night. That was their bright idea of how to bring bootlegging to an end!

Kip would see his wife wrinkling her forehead over problems such as this, and making memoranda in a note-book, and he would look puzzled, and say: "What are you going to do with all that stuff?" She wouldn't tell him definitely: she would just say: Jerry and Roger were not going to have their way in the world without somebody answering back!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN · *CORONER'S JURY*

I

MAGGIE MAY went away to a maternity hospital. It was a big, impressive place, and cost more than Kip had been able to save out of his salary. He made the discovery that it is convenient to have a wife with an income of her own; he wondered what young couples did when the wife was not so fortunate. Perhaps that was why so many couples of the middle-class world didn't have babies—or stopped when they discovered the expensiveness of the first one.

Kip and the two old ladies visited that institution, with smooth white walls and rounded corners, everything hygienic, and smelling of disinfectants. There was Maggie May lying in bed, pale and exhausted, but oh, so proud, because it was a fine big boy, and the image of Kip. The nurse brought him in on a pillow, and they were allowed to have a glimpse—an incredible spectacle, a red and wrinkled creature, alive, and making motions with its lips. It was Kip's own, and really did look like a caricature of him, with a flat nose and a round bald head! Afterwards they put it in a room with some fifty others, laid out in squirming rows, with a tag about each one's ankle—but suppose they had made a mistake? Visitors were not allowed inside, not even grandmothers. Poor old Mrs. Tarleton had to peer through a glass partition at her very own grandchild! There were several other old ladies peering indignantly through the glass, but Kip brought them to laughter by referring to the place as "grandmother's hell."

Two weeks later Maggie May was back home, rosy and bright again, and bringing that precious miracle—that flat-nosed, bald-headed image of Kip. It is a peculiar fact that life may make the worst possible failures, but when it starts all over again, nobody can resist it. Those tiny fingers, each endowed with its separate bit of magic; those toes stuck into the air, turned the wrong way, wriggling and reaching around, as if trying to get hold of the branch of a tree! Those mysterious angel smiles, "not in entire forgetful-

ness"—no, there was no holding out against them, and Mrs. Fessenden, who had made a failure of her own, came over every day to gaze at this new one of her cousin's, and advise her how to take care of it. She begged to be allowed to pay all the bills—she must have some solid part in this job of creation. Even Mrs. Ralston, the former Countess Ensenada, that brilliant young addict to country club life, came in to gaze, and obscure instincts stirred in the deeps of her, and she went off remarking that a poodle wasn't enough.

Word had gone by telegraph to Pointe Chilcote, and obscure instincts stirred there, and the other grandmother wrote that she must come and have a look. Mrs. Fessenden invited her to visit Broadhaven; a couple of weeks later there she was, two hundred pounds of grand-maternity, quivering with pleasure because the new infant had been named Roger Chilcote Tarleton, and it was a double honor, because she was told it was after her late husband, and also after her son! She took possession of the nursery and its treasure, and told Maggie May how she, Maggie May, had behaved at that age, and how early Lelia had learned to talk, and how Lee had been so slow, but the doctors had said not to worry, and sure enough, it had turned out all right. She told Maggie May about Lee's bride, and how she was expecting a baby next month, and that would be eight grandchildren, and it made a grandmother feel that God would reward her in the hereafter.

Kip was as proud as the rest of them. He did not analyze his own strange emotions; but somehow he knew that he, and not all these fluttering women, had been the real cause of this marvel of creation. And no one could deny that this woman, Maggie May, this mother of his son, had done what she had done for his sake. She had had his baby for him—because she loved him! He was not an egotistical man—he was just a man. He was glorified by this love which he had earned; he was glad he had earned it; he was glad he was a good husband; he was glad that when he went to work, his wife could know that he was really working, and not thinking about some other woman, nor getting drunk. He was glad for her sake that she had found a husband who agreed with her ideas on the subject of getting drunk!

II

Roger's play went on about this time, and Maggie May missed seeing it; but Kip went to the opening night, and brought the news.

It was a grim and ghastly thing, and was a great success with the highbrow critics, who compared it with Strindberg, and Dostoievski, and other names which were passwords to glory. For some reason it was considered an advance in American culture that a play should be produced which lasted more than three hours, and in which the principal characters all committed suicide or went insane before the time was up. The reviewers said it remained to be seen whether the public would stand anything so "realistic." It was seen quickly —the theatre being empty at the end of the second week.

This was a severe moral strain upon the golden-haired playwright, who wanted to be popular as well as famous, and wanted the money which popularity brings. He could never forget that he had once managed to combine both kinds of success, and he would go on, blindly hoping to achieve the miracle a second time. He never would succeed, and so would become an embittered man, expending his gifts of language in sneers at the thing which he envied and pretended to despise.

The first shock of disappointment was the hardest of all. The poet was living with Eileen Pinchon in an apartment on Riverside Drive—not so fashionable a neighborhood, but they had to economize. Eileen was keeping herself beautiful, and spent her mornings with masseuses and beauty parlor specialists, getting "facials" and "permanents" and what not. She and her literary lion were tied up in a tangle of social obligations, and Eileen's conversation was about dinner-parties and dances, and whether they owed an invitation to this one, or had anything to gain by cultivating the favors of that. It was her faithful and devoted idea of how to promote a playwright's fame and glory. How could you expect people to do anything for you, if you paid no attention to them, and refused to admit your human obligations? Were all writers such blind egotists?

Roger was frantic with the boredom of this, and threatened to break away again. But he didn't have a theme for a new play, and couldn't stand Eileen unless he had a job of writing to do. He stayed on, and looked about for a story, and as it had to be about a woman, it meant that Roger looked for a brilliant and fascinating young female. There were many looking for him, and of course he couldn't get their stories unless he was alone with them. The first law he had laid down to Eileen had been that he was to be "free," and that his life was not to be cursed with jealousy. The effort to carry on according to this formula brought Eileen close

to the verge of neurasthenia, and produced baffling emotional outbursts.

So Roger failed to enjoy another winter of fashionable life, and drank a great deal, because that was the easiest way to escape from problems which could not be solved. Eileen drank only for politeness, but she lived on coffee and cigarettes, and took sleeping powders at night, and then wondered why the "facials" didn't save her complexion. She would fret for days over a dinner, and when some little thing went wrong, would be wild with nervousness, and consider that everything had been ruined; she would tell Roger the many sins of the servants—and how could Roger understand that this was a substitution for telling him his own sins? Having the writer's privilege to be secluded with his Muse, he took to locking himself up.

Rumors came to Maggie May about her brother. The same solicitous person who had mailed her clippings about Lilian Ashton now sent a story from the "Evening Star," telling how a golden-haired playwright from Louisiana, whose shining countenance had become the morning sun of the "swanky" cabarets, had been too attentive to the best friend of a well-known novelist of underworld life, and the two had become involved in an altercation from which the playwright had retired with a bleeding proboscis. There were several inches of such "swanky" gabble, and one could not imagine anything less pleasant for an old-fashioned sister to read. But there was nothing she could do about it, for she had to stay at home and be a well-nourished cow—there wasn't going to be any bottle regime for the infant son of this old-fashioned mother. No, Roger would have to follow in his father's footsteps; and Maggie May would get from the library another supply of pamphlets and books on the liquor problem.

III

President Harding was dead, and in his place sat a tight-lipped gentleman from the pious commonwealth of Massachusetts. The newspapers celebrated him as a "strong, silent statesman"; and to justify this title, he emitted more prattle than any man who had occupied the White House since it was built. He was a believer in prohibition, so he said; he put at the head of the prohibition service a genial stout gentleman who said that he also believed in the law; and the American people proved once more that they were the most docile and most credulous in the world.

President Coolidge's system of dealing with prohibition was what Maggie May came to call "five percent enforcement." Really to have enforced the law, in a vast country like the United States, would have cost a million dollars a day. President Coolidge would ask Congress to appropriate five percent of this necessary amount, and Congress would obediently do so. If some bold person would suggest five and one-half percent, or maybe five and three-quarters, the enforcement officials would declare, no, that was too much, they really wouldn't know how to spend that much money. They would get their five percent, and would spend it raiding "joints" run by this little fellow and that, and in spectacular café raids which made a fuss in the newspapers. The "church element" would read such stories every morning, and their lust for vengeance upon John Barleycorn would be satisfied. Meanwhile the big fellows would proceed with their wholesale violations, and it would be impossible for any government official to find out anything about it.

For five years and a half "Cautious Cal" sat cautiously in his presidential seat, and applied this system of five percent enforcement, and saw the traffic in bootleg liquor grow until it overshadowed the government itself, and in fact became the government in all the great cities. In the cabinet, responsible for the administration of the law, was a three-hundred-times millionaire banker, called "the greatest secretary of the treasury since Hamilton." A principal part of this gentleman's fortune had come out of the distilling of whisky; when he was questioned about the matter, he would say that he had disposed of his holdings—and the questioner would never be rude enough to ask whether he had disposed of them to his wife, or his brother, or his brother-in-law, or his son, or his old maid cousin. The distilleries which had been sold went on working day and night; making liquor to be sold under faked permits, and raw alcohol to be sold to perfumery manufacturers and varnish manufacturers, and from them passed on to the makers of synthetic booze.

As it was with the Mellon family, so it was with the other political and financial chieftains. The distilleries of Canada, financed by American money, multiplied their capacity, and floods of liquor poured across the border; the government confiscated its five percent, and the profits of politicians in Detroit and of bankers in Chicago covered the loss ten times over. The breweries of New York and Boston and Baltimore worked day and night, making full strength beer, and it was impossible for enforcement officials to get in and find out what was happening, because they were so busy raiding an

Italian restaurant where five ditch-diggers were sharing a bottle of "Dago red." The islands and estuaries of the Gulf of Mexico, which had once been the rendezvous of pirates, now saw history repeating itself; there was such a stream of golden rum from the Bahamas that a large part of the population of the United States sought to move into Florida.

Kip and Maggie May were in a different position from most of the "church element" of the United States; they had a number of immoral acquaintances, and so were in position to know what was going on. The big fellows gossiped among themselves, and swapped anecdotes, and formed "pools," and let one another "in" on this or that. If you had access to fashionable society, it was part of your privilege to hear all this; you weren't even pledged to secrecy, because what could you do if you wanted to? If a wowser tried to publish such things in the newspapers, he would find that the newspapers were a part of the "wet" machine. If the wowser told it on a public platform, the papers would call him a slanderer, and ninety-nine people out of a hundred would believe it.

So, when Roger came out to have dinner at Broadhaven, he would denounce the rotten politicians in Washington, who made dry speeches, and voted the money for five percent enforcement, and then went to their private chambers and got "soused." According to Roger, the public buildings in Washington were bootleggers' nests; the law-breakers kept their offices in public property—for safety as well as for economy. The House and Senate were full of men who voted dry and drank wet, and the whole thing was the vilest experiment in hypocrisy.

After listening to this, Kip would go in to New York, and have lunch with Jerry Tyler, and the editor of the "Gothamite," who knew more scandal than any other young man of Manhattan, would tell him how the police had put a prominent restaurant man out of business because he had refused to serve wine with his meals, thus setting a bad example. Or the story of how some government official had proposed to make a raid in the divorce capital of the country, Reno, Nevada; the big business man who controlled that state had flown into a rage, and said that if they didn't lay off, he would close down all his enterprises, and leave half the people of the state to starve. To this threat the government had been forced to yield, and now there was an arrangement whereby the liquor supply for the divorce capital went across the continent in special trucks under government seal!

IV

The far end of Long Island, the natural landing-place for the rum-runners of New York, throve mightily under this five percent system. The roads were worn by the heavy speeding trucks, and the big fellows had established routes, with guards at strategic points. There would be battles between the regular "pullers," and independent gangs who tried to "muscle in" on the treasure. It was no job for the little fellow, with no "protection"; even though he paid the price at the boat, he would be held up half a dozen times on his way to the city, by traffic-cops cruising "on their own." Every truck had to have a "pay-off man," with a big wad of bills.

Needless to say, there was no interference with the affairs of a great banker who had put up the campaign funds to elect both Harding and Coolidge. Night after night the trucks came thundering into Broadhaven, and the village would whisper the name of the ship; when the trucks stopped coming, the village would whisper that the ship was gone. The three-mile limit had been changed by high-pressure diplomacy, and now the rum-ships had to lie out at sea, a distance greater than the power-boats could make in an hour. This had spoiled the favorite amusement of the owners of pleasure-craft, who had been accustomed to go out and inspect the fleet, and watch the speed-boats loading up, ready to make their landing after dark.

The Federal officials kept threatening in the newspapers to break up this notorious "Rum Row," but their efforts were feeble. The government had a few launches, but they were slow, and were needed in the harbors where tugboat hands sometimes brought in half a dozen bottles in their duffle. The navy had fleets of torpedo-boats and destroyers, but it wouldn't have been dignified to use them in putting down the rum-traffic. And besides, the admirals and captains were needed on shore, to make speeches at banquets, and drink toasts to the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment.

Banker Fessenden had been at his new business for a year, and must have made a good thing of it, for the rumors of financial troubles died away, and the Fessenden Trust took full-page advertisements in the New York papers, telling the public that "hard times" were over, and that the worst mistake anybody could make was to "sell America short." The Tarleton family gradually reconciled themselves to living in a smugglers' rendezvous; especially

since Lee wrote that it was no better at home—the rum-runners kept using Pointe Chilcote, with or without permission. Mrs. Doaks and her delegation went on protesting, until everybody was sick of them, and they retired into their churches, where they sang and prayed and scolded to their hearts' content, without doing any harm to the prosperity of Long Island.

Of course, the use of a man's home for wholesale law-breaking could not fail to exercise some influence upon it. Mrs. Fessenden was ashamed of what was happening, and met it by drawing more and more into herself; she and her old ladies would lock themselves in their rooms at night, and social life stopped so far as she was concerned. If the master gave a dinner-party, that was his affair, but she would no longer invite her friends. Evelyn and Roy Ralston, having their way to make in a highly competitive world, took to using her father's home for social purposes; there would be parties, with a hilarious crowd, and Evelyn would cajole the old man into opening his cellar. So, at two or three o'clock in the morning, when the trucks were due, there would be a bunch of young society people out on the loggia, cheering them as they passed; and of course the drivers and guards of the trucks would cheer back—that was the kind of sporty crowd they liked having around.

Also, "Master Dick" found a way to make himself known to these smugglers. Would any nineteen-year-old youth, accustomed to having his cocktail for half his life, have failed to thrill to this adventure, and to become acquainted with the mysterious men of the night? Dick would be at the pier, and the men found out that he was "right," and would exchange joshing remarks, and teach him the language of the "alky racket." It was complicated, because the boat was not a boat—no, the truck was the "boat," while the boat was a "sneaker," or if it had an outboard motor, it was a "putt-putt." The "skipper" was not the man who ran the boat, but the police official who had charge of the district, and the "trigger-man" of the "outfit" said there would be no "bad news" for this "freight," because they had an "in" with the "skipper," he had their "grease," and there'd be no "buttons" or "noses" on this "spot." There was always a case open, to be distributed to those who did small favors to the "pullers," and they would pass a bottle to Dick, so that the youngsters of his set envied him, as in earlier days they had envied the boy whose father kept the village candy-shop.

V

Such was the situation; until one summer night, between two and three o'clock, with everything still, and a bright moon shining, the peace of Broadhaven was broken by a shot, the signal for a fusilade which wakened nearly everybody on the place. "Lie down on the floor!" cried Kip to Maggie May—since it was obvious that bullets which might penetrate a window would be stopped by a brick wall. He grabbed the precious infant, and laid him on the floor with them; and there they stayed, holding their breath, until the war was over. There was the sound of a truck roaring past; there was the sound of a motor-boat, chugging its way out of the moonlit harbor; and that was all.

What had happened? And what were they to do? Maggie May clung to Kip—apparently desiring that he should spend the rest of the night on the floor. But he insisted that whoever had done the shooting would not linger, and finally she let him go to the telephone and call the superintendent. McCallum had heard the shooting, and told Kip to meet him at the office. Maggie May insisted upon going with him, a wrap thrown about her shoulders. If there was going to be more fighting, she would get between him and the bullets.

There was a consultation of men who had gathered from all directions; the boatman, one of the chauffeurs, a footman, a gardener. It must have been "hijackers," trying to steal the liquor. Everybody knew about this kind of thing; the papers were full of stories, and there was more gossip than ever got printed—the wars of the different gangs, all over Long Island. What had happened, and had the "hi'sters" got away with it?

"Where is Wallins?" asked Kip, suddenly. The night-watchman must have seen the fight, and perhaps been in it. But where was he? Every one scattered to look for him, in all the places they could think of. The boatman went down towards the pier, and presently they heard him shouting, and ran to the place, and there lay the ex-service man on his face, with his repeating shotgun by his side, and a bullet-hole drilled through his forehead.

In the midst of great excitement they examined the ground and read the story of the fight. The night-watchman had posted himself behind a tree, and had done a part of the firing, for there were half a dozen empty shells about where he lay. But whom he had been firing at, and whether he had hit anyone—that they would never know. There were footprints and marks of a truck as usual, and

there were perhaps a score of revolver cartridges where the truck had been. Later on there were some blood-spots found, but no more bodies, and nothing to tell whether the truck had been taken away by those who were "right," or by others who were "wrong."

"Oughtn't we call the police, Mr. McCallum?" asked the boatman.

"No, by God, you'll call no police!" snapped the superintendent. "This is a matter for the master." He got them all together and gave them a lecture on the seriousness of the situation, and what the newspapers would do to Broadhaven. Until Mr. Fessenden had spoken, all their mouths were sealed.

McCallum went back to the office with Kip, and spent some time getting the banker on the telephone, at his apartment on top of the Fessenden Trust Building in New York. He told what had happened, and answered many questions, and the master instructed him to say nothing and do nothing. "Leave it to me," he said. "I will fix everything." That was the way of the great and powerful; they were "fixers." Mr. Fessenden would telephone the political boss who controlled the local officials, and was accustomed to come to him when the campaign-chest needed refilling. The situation would be handled in a dignified way, and a leading citizen would be spared embarrassment.

VI

The banker was at Broadhaven before daylight, which meant that he had come as fast as a motor-car could bring him. He had a conference with McCallum, and then summoned Kip to the library of the mansion, and put him in a chair where the light of a table-lamp shone on his face, while the master himself sat in shadows. Even so, from the tone of his voice and the persistence of his questions, Kip could see that he was worried. He looked older, and his habitual manner of aloofness was changed for a more human one. "Now, Tarleton," he said, "tell me what you know about this business."

"I don't know anything, Mr. Fessenden. I was asleep, like everybody else, and the shooting woke me up."

"You didn't look out of the window?"

"No, sir, I kept away from the bullets. I thought my place was with my wife and child."

"You haven't seen any suspicious-looking characters about the place?"

"No, sir."

There was a pause. "You understand, Tarleton, the police will be here pretty soon, and they'll be asking all sorts of questions. There'll have to be a coroner's inquest over this body."

"Yes, sir."

"It will be unpleasant; the newspapers are always hunting for scandals and sensations."

"I know that, sir."

"The coroner will doubtless ask you questions—and it's a public hearing. You'll have to be careful what you tell. You might incriminate innocent parties."

The old gentleman was in an arm-chair, his elbow resting on the arm of his chair and his chin in his hand. He kept pulling at his chin, or at the lobe of his ear; his hand, which he couldn't keep still, revealed what his carefully chosen words concealed. "You know, Tarleton, a rich man has many enemies; and they'll take advantage of an accident such as this."

"Yes, sir, I suppose so."

"There are envious, petty people in the village who would like to have a nasty story on Broadhaven, and spread it in the papers. They will try to get something out of you. I hope you realize that no one but the newspapers has anything to gain from publicity over this affair; and that I have a right to expect loyalty from my employees in such a situation."

"I see no reason to help the scandal sheets, Mr. Fessenden."

Again a pause. The banker was having difficulty in coming to the point; and Kip, who had a guess what the point was to be, was no less shy of it. Finally, however, the master made the break. "You have heard things around here at night, before this?"

"Yes, sir."

"Just what have you heard around here at night?"

"Well, I have heard those trucks——"

The master interrupted: "But you never paid any attention to them?"

"No, sir."

"Never saw any of the men who drove them?"

"No, sir."

"Never reported them to anybody?"

"No, sir. You see, I had been told it was to be none of my business."

"Who told you that?"

"Mr. McCallum."

"Just what did he say?"

"He said Wallins was to be in charge of the place at night, and I was not to concern myself with anything that went on. That was your orders."

"What? He told you that came from *me?*"

"That is what he said, sir."

"I certainly never gave him any such orders. I hope you understand that."

"Well, of course, I only know what he told me, Mr. Fessenden."

The banker's voice was sharp and positive now. He was giving orders, and no mistake about it. "That was some time ago, Tarleton? Quite a while ago?"

"Yes, sir; before the trucks began to come."

"Your memory may be at fault," the positive voice went on. "A man can't trust his memory for more than a year. There may be a disagreement between you and McCallum, as to whether he said it or not."

Kip wasn't the most brilliant person in the world when it came to diplomacy, but he got the thought behind those sentences. "There may be a disagreement," he said; and then added, "I understand."

The master's voice softened. He almost smiled as he went on. "There are times, my boy, when it is better to realize that the memory is very fallible. Therefore the only safe thing is to say that you don't remember. There can never be any objection to that under the law; nobody can force you to remember things that happened a long time ago. I have given you a good position here, and you have many advantages that ordinary employees do not have. You have been, as it were, a member of the family, and I have a right to count upon you in an emergency involving my wife and your wife. You realize that a rich man is a target for many kinds of attacks, and the most insignificant things can be used as weapons against him in an affair like this. So just make sure that you don't remember any orders about trucks. You were employed here as assistant superintendent, and you had a definite job, with definite hours; you knew there was another man in charge at night, and you were to leave him the responsibility for his job. When you heard a truck now and then, you knew it was not your affair, and never interested yourself. McCallum will say the same thing, and there won't be any dispute between you, and no nasty story for the papers, involving innocent parties. You understand?"

"Yes, Mr. Fessenden. I see what you mean."

VII

So that was that. The master had told him what he expected of him, regardless of any moral conviction he, Kip, might have. It was the master's life-long habit to say what he wanted, and to get it. Kip was dismissed, and went home, and took Maggie May aside; he told her what had happened, and waited for her reaction.

It came, more swiftly and clearly than his own. "Are you going to lie for him?" demanded Maggie May.

That was her fashion; she didn't try to find pleasant words for disagreeable things. More and more, every day, she was becoming a fighter.

"I'm hoping I won't be asked," said Kip, anxiously.

"Yes, but suppose you are; what are you going to do?"

"I don't know yet. It's complicated. What would *you* do?"

"I asked *you*," said Maggie May, with her eyes still fixed upon him. He felt as if he were before the Judgment Throne.

"But, honey, it's *your* family! It's *your* affair, and Cousin Jenny's, and Roger's. The papers will smear Cousin Jenny, her home, all of us. Have we a right to do that? As the old man said, I might involve innocent parties. Has one the right to save his honor at the expense of others who are innocent? Cousin Jenny—what has she done to deserve more suffering?"

An answer to this did not come promptly, so Kip went on arguing the case alone. "It isn't as if I knew who did the killing. This really hasn't anything to do with the killing; it's just a technicality. Everyone in the neighborhood knows as much as I do about the rum-running. Why should I be the one to furnish the newspapers with a peg to hang the scandal on?"

Still Maggie May waited, as if testing him out. He blundered on with his protests. "The murderer will never be caught—not a ghost of a chance of that, as you know. They don't want to catch the murderer—Mr. Fessenden won't let them, because of the scandal. So all that could be accomplished by my talking would be to give the newspapers a chance to sell a million copies at Cousin Jenny's expense."

He stopped, and waited. "All that's true," said Maggie May, finally. "But Kip, you do remember what Mr. McCallum said to you! You came home and told me about it, and I remember every word you said. So, if you deny it, you'll be *lying*."

"Yes, that's so." Kip had to admit it.

"And you'll be under *oath*. You'll be *perjuring* yourself. Do you want to do that? It seems to me, all civilization would fall to pieces if men became perjurers."

"It might be a choice of crimes," argued Kip. "It might kill Cousin Jenny. Then I'd be a murderer."

"No, it won't kill her, Kip. She'll suffer, of course. But in the end it might help her, by forcing Mr. Fessenden out of this rum business."

"Then you want me to answer the question?"

"I want you to decide for yourself, and not on account of Cousin Jenny, or me, or my family."

"Well, it'll mean that we have to give up this position, and this home; you and the boy have something to say about that."

"You don't have to consider that part of it, Kip. We can find some other house to live in, and some other way to earn our living. Our boy must not be the excuse his parents take for putting safety before honor."

"All right," he said. "If that's the way you feel, the situation is changed. Certainly I haven't any duty to lie in order to shield Mr. Fessenden from newspaper scandals. I have earned what he has paid me, and it was never in the bargain that I should sell my conscience."

So Maggie May no longer had to sit upon the Judgment Throne. "I'll tell you the honest truth, Kip—I'd be half glad if we lost this job. Of course, it's pleasant, everything is so comfortable, and Cousin Jenny so very kind; but I'd feel happier with some job that didn't bring us so close to the underworld."

"All right," said Kip, "that settles it."

"Of course," added Maggie May, with feminine caution, "I don't mean that you should go out of your way to get Mr. Fessenden into trouble. He's no worse than most of them. I'm saying, if you're asked the direct question, and have to tell or commit perjury, then don't be afraid for me."

VIII

The village constables came, and the county detectives, and went through the same performance as in the case of the burglary. They examined the tire tracks, and gathered up the used shells, and found the blood-spots and dug some of them out of the ground, and made a diagram of the locality, showing where the body had

been found. But they didn't ask many questions; they were content with the superintendent's assurance that everybody on the place had been asleep in bed. The afternoon papers told how a rum-running outfit had attempted to use the Fessenden estate for a secret landing of liquor, and the banker's night-watchman had attempted to halt them, and had been shot.

Such was the story, in all the papers except one, that terrible tabloid, the "Evening Star." Everybody loathed the "Star," because it was so cheap, so vulgar, so full of sex stuff and rotten fakes. Nobody mentioned a further reason for loathing it—that in its greed for sensation it overlooked the right of wealthy persons to have their feelings considered. The "Star" sent its sleuths to interview the villagers, and came out with a scare story to the effect that a prominent banker had been allowing the harbor of his estate to be used for the landing of liquor cargoes, and the police knew it, and were protecting him. The moral of that was, read the "Evening Star" for inside stories of graft and crime! Thousands of persons drew that moral, and bought the "Star" the next afternoon, to see what other crimes the banker had been committing.

The coroner's inquest took place the second day after the shooting. It was held in the "mortuary parlor" to which the body had been taken. The coroner empanelled a dozen citizens of the village, and they viewed the remains, with the bullet-hole which no one could fail to see, and then filed into the little chapel, and seated themselves in a row of chairs on the raised dais in front. They all had their Sunday clothes on, and looked very solemn, because it was a case of first degree murder, and the population of Seaview was deeply stirred.

Kip had received a summons, and so had McCallum, and the boatman, and all who had been on the scene when the body was found. Mr. Fessenden had not been "summonsed," nor any of his family. Maggie May was with Kip, and Mrs. McCallum with her husband, both of them in their best clothes. There was quite a crowd of villagers, and three or four newspaper reporters. Kip looked at the members of the jury, and saw that one of them was Mr. Jonas Buttolph, the village notion-dealer, a lady-like little man, deferential to customers; but he was a Seventh Day Adventist of strict convictions, and one of the supporters of Mrs. Doaks, and it flashed over Kip that if the coroner was intending to favor the

rich landlord, he had made a mistake in allowing Mr. Buttolph to climb into a seat of authority.

The coroner was a stout and rather flabby person, a typical politician, who was carrying out a difficult job with a limited supply of ability. He had a round, red face, and dark hair parted in the middle and plastered down with pomade. "Alexander McCallum to the stand," he called; and the stumpy little Scotchman came forward. He raised his right hand and swore to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help him God; his bright blue eyes moved here and there defiantly, as if challenging anybody to question his word. The coroner asked him about the finding of the body, and he told what had happened. The coroner asked if he knew any more than this, and when he said he did not, that was supposed to end the matter.

The superintendent had risen, in the act of leaving the witness chair—when up popped Mr. Jonas Buttolph. "I would like to ask the witness a question, please."

The witness sat back, stiff and straight, and his sandy hair seemed to bristle as he fixed his gaze upon the challenger. The notion-dealer swallowed once or twice, nervously, and began: "You have no idea who those men were that were driving the truck?"

"None in the world," said the superintendent, in the prompt, decisive manner that Kip knew so well.

"Have you ever heard trucks coming into Broadhaven at night?"

There it was—the wowsers starting their dirty work! The coroner interposed an objection; that had nothing to do with this crime. But the little man who sold pins and needles for the glory of the Lord flushed excitedly, and insisted that it had everything to do with the crime, because if men had been driving trucks into Broadhaven on other nights, it was likely they were the men who had committed the crime, or had been present at the scene, and it was the jury's business to find out who they were. There was a murmur from the crowd, reminding a politician who has to be elected to office that he must not go too far in the effort to protect law-breakers. There were newspaper reporters, ready to report whatever was said. He gave up weakly, and the cross-examination went on.

"Have you heard trucks coming into Broadhaven on other nights?"

"I have."

"Have you known what they were doing?"

"I have not."
"Why not?"
"Because it was not my beesiness."
"You are the superintendent of the estate, are you not?"
"Only in the day-time."
"Oh! You have nothing to do with what happens at night?"
"Nothing in the worrld."
"How did that come to be,"
"There was a night-watchman who had charge."
"Oh! Didn't you hire that night-watchman?"
"I did not."
"Who hired him?"
"Mr. Fessenden hired him."
"And how long has that arrangement been standing?"
"Ever since I was first employed, fifteen years ago."
"You never were told anything about the trucks that came into the place at night?"
"I was not."
"And so this dead man was the only one who knew about them?"
"I don't know that he knew about them, sir. What I have testified is that *I* didn't know about them."

IX

It was Kip's turn. He went as a lamb to the slaughter—or as a lamb might go, if he knew about slaughters. He saw that Buttolph was determined to put the scandal of Broadhaven into the newspapers if it could possibly be done. And that meant good-bye to Kip's comfortable job! There was no hiding the worried look on his face.

The coroner did what he could to protect the witness. He asked only about the finding of the body, and when Mr. Buttolph tried to ask more, he tried hard to block the way. What was the use of going into all that again? But the stubborn juror insisted that what one witness did not know had nothing to do with what another witness might know. He seemed to be as well posted as if he were a prosecuting attorney; knowing exactly what questions to ask. He insisted that members of a coroner's jury had the legal right to question witnesses. The coroner himself wasn't sure about it, and was afraid to reveal his ignorance. Also, he remembered the newspaper reporters, who were eagerly scenting a story.

"Mr. Tarleton, you heard sounds of a truck driving away immediately after the shooting?"

"Yes, sir." Kip had been brought up in the Southern tradition, which required him to be respectful to those older than himself.

"You had heard trucks coming on other nights, before this?"

"Yes, sir."

"You had heard them frequently?"

"Yes, sir."

"Almost every night."

"Every night for a considerable period, yes, sir."

"Did you know what those trucks were doing?"

"No, sir, I couldn't say that I knew of my own knowledge."

"You mean, you had heard others say what they were doing?"

The coroner broke in again. The witness was not permitted to give hearsay testimony. All this procedure was highly irregular—they were wasting a lot of time—and so on. The official tried yet again to sidetrack the questioning; but the little notion-dealer stuck like a leech. All right, he wouldn't ask any more hearsay; he would ask what the witness himself had seen and done.

"You never knew what those trucks were doing?"

"No, sir."

"You never made any effort to find out?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"Well, that was not my duty."

"You were told that when you were employed?"

"No, sir—not when I was employed."

"Oh! You were told that later on?"

"Yes, sir."

"You were told that you were to pay no attention to the trucks?"

"I wasn't told exactly that."

"What exactly were you told?"

"I was told to pay no attention to what went on at night. That was to be the night-watchman's affair."

"Who told you that?"

"Mr. McCallum told me that."

"Oh, Mr. McCallum told you, some time after you were hired, that you were to pay no attention to things that happened at night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Just when did he tell you that?"

"I should say it was a little over a year ago."

"A little over a year ago. That was about the time the trucks started to come, wasn't it?"

"It was just before the trucks started to come."

"Oh! You were told that you were to pay no attention, and right after that the trucks started to come, and you paid no attention—is that it?"

"Yes, sir, that is it."

One could feel the thrill of excitement all over the little chapel. The wowsers were like bloodhounds that have struck a fresh trail. The superintendent had lied! And here was an honest young man, who would tell the truth, and nail the great rich lawbreaker to the cross! The little notion-dealer leaned half out of his chair, and the newspaper reporters bent busily over their copy-paper.

"Mr. Tarleton, did Mr. McCallum tell you *why* you were not to pay any attention?"

"No, sir. He said de didn't know."

"Oh, he didn't know! Then it was somebody else's orders he was giving you?"

"Yes, sir."

"He told you it was somebody else's orders?"

"Yes, sir."

"Whose orders did he say it was?"

"Stop!" commanded the coroner. "Don't answer that!"

X

What a wrangle there was, and what excitement in the crowd! The question was a deadly one, and the coroner did his best to keep it from the record. His rosy face became scarlet as he insisted that this line of inquiry was out of order, because it called for second-hand evidence. But Buttolph denied that it was second-hand evidence in the meaning of the law. He was not trying to prove anything against the witness, nor against the previous witness; he was merely trying to find out about the trucks which had been coming to Broadhaven. They were liquor-trucks—everybody knew that; they were the trucks of law-breakers, and if anybody in Broadhaven had known about those trucks, then surely that person might have evidence that bore upon the shooting, and would be a proper person to be "summonsed."

The voice of the lady-like Mr. Buttolph rose to a shrill falsetto as he called the coroner's attention to section 775 of the Code of

Criminal Procedure, as to the duty of a coroner. "He must summon and examine as witnesses every person who is in his opinion *or that of any of the jury,* has knowledge of the facts." The merchant of needles and pins read this from a piece of paper he held in his trembling hand. He knew the law, and he was not going to let anybody stop him!

You could see it was a "put up job." The wowsers had got together, and planned the vengeance of the Lord upon the master of Broadhaven! Kip, listening to the wrangle, found himself wondering in quick flashes, had there been some "leak"? Neither he nor Maggie May had said a word about the dilemma in which he was caught. But what about Mrs. McCallum, whom he saw sitting stiff and uncompromising, just in front of him? That stern Presbyterian lady must have known what her husband had told Kip; could it be that in some indiscreet moment she had trusted one of her church friends with the dangerous secret? Perhaps long ago, before she had known how dangerous it was!

Anyhow, the servants of the Lord were armed and prepared, and they forced the coroner to give up. The dread question was asked again: "Did Mr. McCallum tell you who had given him those orders?"

"Yes, sir, he did."

"Who did he say had given them?"

"He said Mr. Fessenden had given them."

"Oh! Mr. McCallum told you that Mr. Fessenden had ordered him to pass these orders on to you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Fessenden had ordered Mr. McCallum to pay no attention to what went on at night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Tarleton, I ask you: did Mr. McCallum say anything to you as to the reason for these orders?"

"He said there was no reason given, and I was not to ask."

"The idea was, it was something you had better not know about?"

"I'd rather not answer that, Mr. Buttolph, because that would be guessing."

"But you did some guessing at the time?"

"Yes, sir, of course. I couldn't help it."

"I'll not ask you what you guessed, Mr. Tarleton," said the cross-questioner, in tones of sarcasm, and with a glance at the coroner.

"But I'll ask you this: did you ever have reason for thinking that liquor was being landed at Broadhaven?"

Kip took time to reply to that question. He had to be sure of what he said; and he had to overcome his shrinking from the saying. It was a question for which he had not been prepared.

"Answer, please," insisted the merchant of needles and pins.

"Yes, sir, I think I did."

"What knowledge did you have?"

"I saw a boat land at the pier, and I saw boxes and sacks which I had reason to think contained liquor."

"They were loaded on to a truck?"

"No, sir."

"What was done with them?"

"They were carried into the house."

"Into Mr. Fessenden's house?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who carried them?"

"Several men."

"Did you know them?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who were they?"

"Well, one of them was Pierce, the boatman."

"And who else?"

"One was Ferris, the head footman."

"You mean Joe Ferris?"

"Yes, sir."

"The man who was prosecuted for helping to steal liquor from Broadhaven?"

"I don't think he was prosecuted, Mr. Buttolph."

"He was arrested on that charge, wasn't he?"

"Yes, sir."

"And kept in jail for several months?"

"Yes, sir."

"You mean, this liquor was carried in at some time before the burglary at Broadhaven took place?"

"Yes, sir, I mean that."

"Then it's possible that the liquor Ferris carried in might have been the same liquor he helped to steal?"

"It might have happened, I suppose. I couldn't say."

"That was after the law was passed forbidding the transportation of liquor?"

"Yes, sir."
"But you didn't report it to the police?"
"No, sir."
"Why not?"
"Well, I wasn't clear that it was my duty."
"You hadn't been given any order about it?"
"No sir, not at that time."
"But you knew that the law was being broken?"
"Yes, sir, I felt pretty certain that it was."

XI

There was more to this ordeal. The little notion-devil wouldn't give up his opportunity; he wanted to drag everything from Kip that would possibly discredit the people of Broadhaven. He brought out the story of Toni Galluppi, the Italian barber, who had brought liquor to Broadhaven for the younger Richard Fessenden. He even tried to get Kip to tell that he had seen people drunk in the Fessenden mansion; but the coroner stopped him there with decision—it was surely no crime for any one to get drunk in a private home, and it surely had nothing to do with this case. So Kip was excused at last.

The little notion-devil then insisted upon recalling McCallum to the stand, and asking about Kip's testimony. The superintendent came of a race which is noted for its canniness, and he did not assert that his young assistant had lied. All he said was that he had no recollection of ever having given any such orders. His bright blue eyes never flinched as he declared that he had received no orders from Mr. Fessenden, referring to what he was to do at night, or whether or not he was to pay attention to things that went on at night. From the beginning of his service it had been the understanding that he was off duty at night, and had no more to do with Broadhaven than if he had not happened to live on the place.

So that was that; and then came Pierce, the boatman, who told how he had found the body of the night-watchman, and his shotgun, and the used shells. When the little notion-devil went at him, he became full of fight, and denied most positively that he had ever helped to carry any liquor into the Fessenden mansion; the stuff which Kip had thought was liquor was canned lobsters which Mr. Fessenden had purchased somewhere in Massachusetts. Nor had

the witness ever seen anything to cause him to believe that the trucks which came to Broadhaven were carrying liquor, either going or coming. He had never paid any attention to them, because they were not his affair.

The other servants gave testimony to the same effect, and the hearing came to an end. The church people crowded round Kip, to congratulate him upon his courageous stand; and Kip was embarrassed by this applause, because he wasn't in the least proud of himself for having told the secrets of his wife's relatives. However, Maggie May said that he had done his duty, and that was the main thing. They got into the car which Mr. Fessenden permitted them to use upon his business—but surely not intending that it should be used for his betrayal and disgrace!

As soon as they got back to Broadhaven, Maggie May went to Cousin Jenny, and told her what had happened. These two had a good cry over it—for what could poor Mrs. Fessenden do but cry, and say that it was terrible, and then cry some more? She had never told Maggie May her troubles, and didn't tell them now; but she said plainly that she did not blame Kip. Mr. Fessenden—she called him that, in the old-fashioned manner, just as Maggie May's mother had called her husband "Mr. Chilcote" all her life—Mr. Fessenden was the master, and did what he pleased. Of course she might have left him; but she stayed on account of the children, and tried to keep down the scandal—with what success all the world could see!

Maggie May thought that she and her husband ought to get out of Broadhaven at once. But Cousin Jenny said no, they should wait. This trouble might blow over, as others had done; Mr. Fessenden would realize that Kip had told the truth, and it was not so easy to find managers who would not rob and cheat him. Cousin Jenny begged them, because she needed some one she could trust, and to whom she could pour out her troubles.

They waited, and read with shudders the stories in the New York papers. Those which were read by the rich of course played the story down, giving it an inch or two; but the sensational ones made it conspicuous, and the "Evening Star" danced a war-dance all over the thousand acres of Broadhaven. The "Star" reported that the coroner was endeavoring to call the great banker as a witness, but the servers of summons were unable to find him, either at his home or at his place of business. They published a picture of the banker who could not be found. They published pictures of his home,

and of his bank, and of his daughter who had once married a bogus count.

XII

Kip went on with his work; but he felt himself under a cloud, and he fretted about what he had done, and what he should have done. Young Dick Fessenden, who enjoyed the privilege of the rich, to say what he thought to the poor, told Maggie May that Kip's action had been that of a "rotter" and a "cad"; Maggie May repeated this to her husband, and the young couple spent an hour or two discussing those two unpleasant words, and exactly what they meant, and the right of a rich youth, who contributed nothing to society, to apply them to one who, whatever his deficiencies, did his best to earn his keep.

Dick's point of view was simple; the Fessenden family, in paying Kip a salary, and furnishing him a house and other material benefits, had paid for him body and soul; whereas Kip, in failing to deliver the soul, had broken the contract. To the nineteen-year-old Dick it appeared a matter of common sense; when you took a job, you owed loyalty to the person who gave you the job. The feudal system of Long Island had an ethics of its own, inconsistent with the functioning of a private conscience.

Kip, always prone to blame himself, decided that his error was in having stayed on at Broadhaven, and held a job where the sale of conscience was implied. He ought to have taken his family away from the estate—the very day it had been turned into a rum-runners' base! The Fessenden money had become tainted from that hour, and no man could take it and spend it honestly.

The young couple debated the old question of tainted money; what made it, and what purified it. How far would a dollar have to travel from the scene of tainting, in order to become purified again? Suppose Mr. Fessenden had not been directly connected with a law-breaking business, but had earned his money from some one who was—would Kip's salary have been purified in passing through Mr. Fessenden's hands? Suppose that, instead of being once removed, the evil had been twice removed; suppose, for example, that a law-breaker paid a fee to his lawyer, and he in turn paid it to banker Fessenden: would you say that the lawyer was accepting tainted money, but not the banker, nor the assistant manager of the banker's estate? Kip began to wonder, was there any

untainted money in the world! He got himself so tangled up in these casuistical complexities that his wife burst out laughing. She, the wowser, found it a simple matter to satisfy her conscience. "You'll call my husband a cad," she had replied to the insolent Dick, "but be sure you'll never call him a perjurer."

Nor would she waste time fretting over the problem of whether they should stay at Broadhaven. They had made plain to all the world the terms on which they were employed; Kip's labor was for sale, but not his soul—and it was up to Mr. Fessenden to say whether he cared to employ a man on such terms. "Wait," said Maggie May; and they waited.

Until, a couple of weeks later, the Scotchman came into the office, and shut the door, and said, in his fashion economical of words: "Ye had best be lookin' for some other poseetion, Tarleton. We shall not be needin' your services after this month."

"All right, sir," replied Kip. "I'm sorry for what happened, of course; but you know I couldn't help it."

Said the superintendent: "Ye're a bit too gude for this worrld, young man; but ye'll have a fine time in the next one, I've nae doot."

"Thank you, Mr. McCallum," replied Kip. "I don't know so much about the next world, and I'm glad to have your reassurance."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN - - - WOWSER

I

THE Tarleton family were living in a furnished cottage in the village of Seaview. It was an old and dingy place, with grey paint cracked and rusty; they had been lucky to find anything at this season of the year, when the villagers rented their houses at fancy prices, and lived in rooms over garages and barns. Mr. Fessenden had not considered Kip's convenience when he gave him notice to vacate.

The family had come down in the world. The cottage had only five rooms, so that two old ladies had to occupy a room together, and sleep in one three-quarter bed: a hard thing to ask of old ladies, even the mother and the aunt of a wowser! Maggie May and Kip had one room, and the baby slept in a clothes basket on the floor. They had badly worn furniture, of the period known as junk-shop; a bed that sagged in the middle, and a yellow painted dresser whose drawers stuck, and a wire-haired black sofa in the parlor, a what-not, and an embroidered invitation to God to bless their home. With cracked dishes, and a faucet that leaked, and no screens on the door, they sadly missed the comfort and taste of a guest cottage at Broadhaven.

Outside, no spacious lawns and well-trimmed shade-trees, on the portion of an estate reserved for guests! There was a dingy cottage on each side, eight or ten feet away, with a picket fence between, the pickets damaged, so that the neighbors' chickens came in and scratched up the garden, and made messes on the little front porch. The neighbor on the right was a butcher's helper, and the woman ran a "loud-speaker" all day, and made you listen to jazz-tunes in nasal voices. The woman on the other side was the widow of a railroad switchman, who took boarders for a living; she had several small children, and bawled at them continually, and beat them now and then.

Yes, it was unpleasant to be living in such a place; but Maggie May never wavered in her conviction that perjury was perjury.

Cousin Jenny had wept, and said that it was a disgrace to all of them; she must give Maggie May some money; Mr. Fessenden owed it to her. But the young wife said no, she had a little saved up, and had an income from home, and they would live on that until they earned more. The old ladies, who by now had fallen completely under Maggie May's spell, expressed their dismay only to each other; they kept the place as clean as possible, and prepared meals in Southern style, with plenty of hot bread to keep the family spirits up. Kip went out to hunt a job, and the young wife took care of the baby, and in her spare time pored over books, and tried to clarify her own philosophy of life. If a woman was going to defy the world, it was necessary to know just what were the bases of her ethical decisions; just how she became so sure that she was right, and so many other persons wrong.

What was her idea in staying in this neighborhood? Was it to make a gesture of defiance to the master of Broadhaven; to remain as a thorn in his flesh, a symbol of protest against privileged law-breaking? Or was it because Kip had made a reputation here, and Maggie May thought there would be some other owner of an estate who would be glad to have an employee who would not lie and cheat? If the latter was her motive, she had been over-hopeful; the virtues of young Tarleton were not denied, but they were considered as of a theoretical character, ill adjusted to everyday needs. Country gentlemen to whom he made application were startled by the idea of employing a man so scrupulous that he would refuse to tell a little fib to save them from scandal. Moreover, to take on a man who had been so conspicuously ousted from Broadhaven would seem an act of discourtesy to the Fessenden family; the country club members made jokes about the matter, but kept their neighborly solidarity.

Kip was reduced to looking for employment in the village. It was the busy season, and he might have washed dishes in a boarding-house, or taken care of people's lawns. Mr. Buttolph offered him a chance to sell needles and pins for the modest wage of twelve dollars a week. He would have taken such a job, rather than live upon his wife's income; but Maggie May would not consent. Could he not trust her really to appreciate his character? They were fighting the same fight; her money was his, and her love was his. When he got depressed, and wondered if he had not been mistaken in defying the great and powerful ones, she would pour out upon him her deepening convictions. Unless men and women were willing

to risk their personal comfort and safety, there was no way to keep humanity above the level of savages! So Kip would resume his search of the newspaper columns, and write letters beginning: "Dear Sir: In regard to your advertisement, I beg herewith to state——" And as he wrote, he would be thinking: "Will this be a tainted-money job?"

II

Roger Chilcote came to call upon his sister in her new home. He hadn't been invited; for that very reason he had become suspicious, and came unannounced. He found Maggie May sitting on a frayed and dingy rug, playing "blocks" with Roger Chilcote Tarleton. The fastidious poet, the darling of the New York intelligentsia, divided his attention between her and the black horse-hair sofa, the what-not, and the embroidered appeal to God. It was another journey with Dante to the region of damned souls. "Sister," said he, "you didn't *have* to come to a place like this! Surely you might have let me send you a check!"

"We're not taking any checks, Roger. We're going to live our own life now."

"In God's name, who wants to control your life?"

"Everybody! All my relatives and all my friends want me to do something else but what I'm determined to do."

Roger set his Panama hat and grey suede gloves and elegant rosewood cane gingerly on the horsehair sofa, and seated himself in an armchair of dirty green velvet which had damaged springs and let him down too deep for comfort. "Maggie May," said he, "please explain what this is all about."

"You'll be a lot happier if I don't, Roger. You'll think I'm trying to make myself disagreeable."

"I'll promise not to take it personally. I really have to understand my sister."

"All right," said Maggie May. "But please realize, it won't do any good to protest, because this represents the conviction of my lifetime—I mean, I've been thinking about it ever since I can remember. You know, brother, there was a time when you decided to be a writer; you knew what you wanted to do, and nobody else could tell you anything about it; you went ahead and made your own career. Now, I'm made of the same blood, and maybe I've got the same demon in me; anyhow, I'm going to have my way, and be myself."

"And what do you want to be?"

"I want to be a wowser."

"But haven't you always been one, sister?"

"I want to be an acting one. To take all those words of mockery the smart people use, and print them on a banner, and go marching up Fifth Avenue with it. I want to say to the jeering mob: 'Yes, I'm a puritan and a bluenose; I believe in the prohibition law; I think it's the greatest forward step ever taken in America. I want to see it enforced. I want to elect to office men who believe in enforcing it, and who obey it in their private lives; not the frauds and hypocrites and bribe-takers we have at present.' That's how I feel, and millions in America feel like me, and we're going to get together, and speak our convictions, and have our way."

"I see," said Roger. He was really quite awe-stricken—not by her words and ideas, so much as by the passion he felt behind them. "I suppose a lot of this is my fault," he said, apologetically.

"We agreed we weren't going to be personal. You know what my life has been, and what I've seen. You know about Kip and his father. You know Cousin Jenny's children. You know others that I know, and some that I don't. You have a right to your opinions, and I'm not trying to change them. I'm just saying mine; that liquor is the curse of curses, and the man that puts it into his mouth, at any time or under any circumstances, is unfit to live in a civilized world."

"And what, precisely, do you plan to do about it?"

"That's a problem to which I expect to devote the rest of my life. The first thing that I've made up my mind to is that I'm going to say what I think. I shall be just as active in fighting liquor as the bright young intellectuals of Manhattan are in praising it and promoting it and consuming it. In short, I'm going to be a wowser—or whatever else the alcoholic suicides want to call me."

Roger sat for a brief space without words, a condition to which he was not often reduced. He took another glance about him, and inquired: "Do wowsers live in holes?"

"Wowsers live on wowsers' incomes. They cannot expect to thrive like those who feed upon the degradation of humanity, and grow rich upon the ruin of other lives."

So really, there was no more to be said. Roger sat, gazing at his sister appraisingly. He was a connoisseur of women, and looked into the future, and saw that she was going to let go those few charms with which nature had endowed her. She had bobbed her

lovely brown hair, and that was all right, but she didn't have it properly trimmed—probably she had been trying to do it herself, standing in front of the mirror. Already there were wrinkles of thought between her eyes; she was going to become a little, plump, insignificant creature—doubtless she would take to wearing nose-glasses, and serving on committees of women's clubs!

III

Everybody in the village of course knew all about the Tarleton family; they knew that Maggie May was a cousin of the great Mrs. Fessenden, and had lived at Broadhaven as a guest before she became the wife of an employee. So the family did not entirely lose caste because of their removal to a slum neighborhood. No, Mrs. Pollock, the wife of the village druggist, and Mrs. Parker, the wife of the leading grocer, came to the dingy cottage, and sat in the faded green velvet chair which let them too low, and exchanged recollections about the behavior of infants at the age of eighteen months, and then deftly led the conversation to the subject of the house on the hill that was built on a still—only now it was a mausoleum. They eagerly picked up scraps of information about the life of the rich, whether here on Long Island, or in the Teche country. They asked if Maggie May and her husband played bridge, and they invited the old ladies to church sewing-circles, and lawn-parties, and every sort of gathering at which gossip is collected for the glory of the Lord.

The old ladies went gladly; and when Maggie May was not present, they felt themselves at liberty to talk about the beautiful Mrs. Fessenden, and her lonely life in a palace; how good and kind she was—she came to see them, and sent them a bundle of lovely new all-wool blankets, and a box of groceries from the city, so big that they hadn't been able to find room for it all in their kitchen. Also, they listened to cautious whispers about the wickedness of the place; the drinking, and rum-running, and still darker things that were rumored about the old man in the city; and about Mrs. Roy Ralston, the former Countess Ensenada, and the fashionable parties she gave, and how in the summer-time the sun often rose upon the shouting and singing.

Maggie May would not gossip about her cousin; but she went sometimes to the church affairs. She felt free to go now, being no longer under the shadow of law-breaking. She met the active

church people, and talked about the liquor traffic that was going on all about them. It was a serious thing, the fact that the prohibition law, from which so much had been hoped, was being defied all over the country, and those who had charge of enforcement were failing in their task. It was the hope of all the wets that the law would fail; they would labor diligently to make it fail, and then they would point to the failure, proving that the law was unenforceable, and must be repealed.

Gradually there gathered about Maggie May a group of persons who shared her ideas. They knew that she had books on the question in her home, and heard a report that she was engaged in fitting herself to speak for the cause; they had no doubt that she would make a success, because she had youth and charm on her side, and the prestige of two great families behind her. Her brother was said to be one of the most famous playwrights in New York, and one of her uncles had just been appointed a federal judge in Louisiana; yes, it would be an accession to the temperance cause if such a woman were to devote herself to it. She wanted to speak to children; and presently one of the ladies of the Epworth League suggested: "Why not begin in our church?"

It was towards this goal that Maggie May had been leading, with the tact and indirectness which women so well understand. In fact, it was for this that the family had stayed in Seaview. But when the moment for decision came, she fell into a panic, and said no, she would have to wait a while, she wasn't ready quite yet. The other woman argued: what was she waiting for? Surely she knew more about the subject than the children knew; and surely she could talk to a group as easily as to one or two! The upshot was that Maggie May came home and told her astonished husband that in the Methodist church of Seaview, on Wednesday evening twelve days from date, she was scheduled to give a lecture upon the perils of the Demon Rum.

Poor little female wowser, in process of metamorphosis; emerging from the chrysalis, soft, and damp, fragile as wet tissue paper; trembling with ecstasy mingled with terror, and unfolding her wings to the sunlight of publicity! "Oh, Kip, what shall I say? And how in the world can I ever face it?" Kip found it easy to be bold by proxy. What was there to be afraid of in a bunch of village kids? So he cheered her up—but knowing full well that if it had been his job to make a speech, he would have fled the neighborhood.

Maggie May began taking long walks. When she was com-

pletely lost in a big wood, or on a lonely place by the shore, she would stop, and bow, and put on her most charming smile, and say in a loud voice: "Children, we have come here this evening—." Not satisfied, she would start over: "Boys and girls—." Deciding that this was too abrupt, she would experiment: "My young friends of the Epworth League—." She remembered having read that Demosthenes had practiced with a pebble in his mouth, but she could not recollect why this had been necessary; it seemed to her that her mouth was full of pebbles, and her voice sounded as if it came out of a jack-in-the-box.

IV

The lecture was announced from the pulpits of all three Protestant churches of Seaview, and also in the local weekly paper, and on a bulletin-board, written with chalk, in front of the Methodist church. At seven o'clock on Wednesday evening the place was crowded, with perhaps a hundred children, and twice as many adults, some of whom had come to bring the children, and some because this was a social event, possibly even a bit of a scandal. A former guest of Broadhaven was going to discuss liquor-drinking and rum-running and bootlegging, and it might be that she would drop some hints as to scenes she had witnessed among the gilded law-breakers. Even if she didn't do that, you could imagine it while you listened to her. In any case, you would want to see what a former guest of Broadhaven looked like at close range, and how she spoke, and what she wore.

The seekers of sensation got it at the outset, when one of the big shiny limousines from the estate drew up in front of the humble Methodist church, and there emerged from it the mistress of the mansion, followed by three of her old lady pensioners. The great Mrs. Fessenden had come to hear her cousin make her debut as a wowser! Too bad she hadn't brought the former Countess Ensenada, and Master Dick and Master Bobbie, who so badly needed temperance training, if village talk could be believed! Anything that was said about the Demon Rum in the presence of Mrs. Fessenden would go straight home, and eyes in the audience would steal furtive glances, to see how it was affecting the unhappy rich lady in the grey chiffon dress.

Maggie May was escorted to the platform by the pastor of the church, a young man not so long out of the seminary, and eager to

be modern. This was an important social occasion; the first time that anybody from Broadhaven, except the servants, had entered his humble meeting-place. He made a tactful little speech, setting forth that America was some day going to belong to its children, and those who had the training of children were making that new country. Those who had culture and wealth had the power, and here was a young lady who might have been a social butterfly, but had chosen to be an educator, and guide to the feet of childhood. He had pleasure in introducing Mrs. Maggie May Tarleton, who would speak to them on the subject of "*Your* Liquor Problem."

Mrs. Maggie May Tarleton came forward amid scattered applause. She wore that same dress of blue silk which Kip had fallen in love with, and the little spring hat with blue-bells; it was kept in a bureau drawer, wrapped in tissue paper, so its charms were unfaded. If there was anything wrong with the trimming of her hair, it was now effectually concealed; neither was there any frown of thought upon her face, nor any other failure of personal charm. If anywhere inside there was panic or feeling of insecurity, it was covered by layers of social training, and you would have thought this was a young matron of the best social circles welcoming guests to her drawing-room. She did not use the formulas she had practiced, but said: "My friends"; and persons who lived at the far end of Long Island heard for the first time the soft slow drawl of Louisiana.

She was going to talk about the subject which interested her more than any other in the world. In order that they might know why it interested her, she would tell them about her childhood in the Teche country. Talking to children, she began with the snakes, and how she had hunted for their eggs, and how her father had shot their heads off; she told about the sugar-cane, and the brakes, and the bayous, and the "Cajuns," and the cat-fish, and the turtles, and the swarms of mosquitoes—it is possible to make mosquitoes amusing when they are a thousand miles away. All this, to both children and old people on Long Island, was like a fairy-story, and not in the least like a church lecture.

But there was a dragon in this fairy-story land, and Maggie May went on to tell how she had become aware of his existence. She described the sensations of a child who discovers something wrong with her father, and cannot make out what. Gradually she picked up a hint here and there—her father was "drinking." She told what "drinking" meant in the South; how it was done, socially and cere-

moniously, with so much charm and grace. You were led into it before you had any idea of peril; it wasn't a thing to be afraid of, but to be trusted, like music; it was often accompanied by music, as when the strolling Negro bands came to the house in the evening to serenade you, and each musician got a drink of whisky.

That was the cruel part of this drink evil; it was so insiduous, it crept upon you so gradually, it was veiled with pleasure and good fellowship. But Maggie May, having consulted the medical books, explained that alcohol was a narcotic; which meant that it hardened the walls of the nerve-cells, and dulled their action for a time. It affected first the higher brain-centres, so that it seemed to be a stimulant, and increased a person's sensations; it suppressed all those things which civilization had taught to man, and made him what he might have been a hundred thousand years back. It was habit-forming, which meant that when you had it once you wanted it again.

It was hard to tell stories about your own father, said Maggie May; she had suffered so that for years she had never spoken about it. But now she returned to it in her thoughts, and realized that it had a use—it might teach other people. If her father had known, when he was a boy, what was going to happen to him as a grown man, certainly nobody could have tempted him to use alcohol. No one who knew the torments of the drunkard's soul would either take a drink, or offer the poison-cup to his friend. Here were children who would go out into the world, and be tempted by social drinking, by the joys of good company, by the excitements they saw portrayed in moving pictures. If by telling the story of her father's sufferings, she could save one child from that cruel fate, then her lecture would have served a purpose.

She told them everything, simply and clearly. She described the drinker's psychology: he was ashamed of himself, yet too proud to admit his shame; he lied to himself, and tried to lie to others; he invented tricks and devices to fool himself, to indulge his craving, while making himself think he was keeping his resolutions; he was plunged into abysses of remorse, and then gradually he climbed to heights of self-vaunting. She described the physical effects of drinking, the deterioration of the body, the ugliness and premature old age. Out of any given number of drinkers, so many would take their own lives; which led her to the story of that dreadful morning on the plantation, when the screaming of the Negro women had frozen her young soul, and started her into becoming what people called a "fanatic."

Everybody in the audience, both old and young, was moved, and there was quite an ovation when Maggie May finished. They crowded round to thank her. Old ladies with tears in their eyes caught her hand, and said she had been called to do a wonderful work for the Lord; little children, pushed forward by their parents, declared with shy, stammering voices that they would always remember what she had told them. In short, the lecture was a success; and when Maggie May was alone in her room with Kip, she sat down and had a good cry, and said it had been the worst ordeal she had ever undergone; she didn't know how on earth she had managed to get through. What would poor Cousin Jenny think? And what would poor Mama think when she heard about it? And what would poor Papa think, if he was alive—in heaven, or any other place where he could hear his daughter speaking in the Methodist church of Seaview, Long Island! Maggie May had to be told, a dozen times over, that it had been a grand success, and in the best of taste, and what on earth was the matter with her. It it not such a simple matter being a female wowser; nor for that matter being the husband of one.

V

Maggie May suffered yet more qualms a couple of days later, when the Seaview "Weekly Recorder" appeared. This paper gave a cordial account of the lecture at the Methodist church; it gave the substance of the lecture—and when you saw it in cold type, with the ill-chosen words of an unskilled writer, and none of the delicate methods of approach, the fine shades of feeling—how crude, how unthinkable it seemed To stand up and tell all the world the fact that your father had been a drunkard, and had committed suicide as a result of his weakness. What fanaticism could have driven a young woman thus to part with all delicacy and restraint!

Yes, everybody who read that paper must be having the same reaction, and wondering how she could have done it! Cousin Jenny, who must have been shocked by the lecture, would be doubly shocked now; and those two kind old ladies, Mrs. Tarleton and Miss Dimmock—what would they be thinking, in their secret hearts? And the loved ones at home—if ever they saw this newspaper story!

They saw it; for that same solicitous person who had sent Maggie May the clipping about her brother's row in the cabaret, got promptly to work again. There came an agonized letter from Mrs. Chilcote,

misspelled, as usual, but none the less eloquent. Surely this must be a slander; it was not possible that Maggie May had actually stood up in a public place and exposed her father's "unfortunate weakness!" The composing of a reply to that letter was an even more difficult labor for Maggie May than the making of the speech.

There were other results of more cheering character. Two days after the lecture a Ford car drew up in front of the humble cottage, and there entered a lady who introduced herself as wife of the pastor of the Disciples' church in Sound Harbor, a neighboring town. She had heard about the wonderful lecture Mrs. Tarleton had given, and had come on behalf of her husband, to ask that the lecture be repeated. They would be so grateful, and would assure her an appreciative audience, and—here the pastor's wife looked about at the poor surroundings—they would be glad to send for her and bring her home. There was dire need of temperance activity in Sound Harbor, because the bootleggers were active, and there were several of the places called "speakeasies," and yet it was impossible to get the police to do anything.

Maggie May said yes; and after she had given the lecture, she said yes again to Mrs. Doaks, who came for a friend who was active in church work in another town. There came half a dozen more invitations; and each time there was an offer to bring her to the place and back. The inviter would add with some embarrassment that their church was poor, and couldn't afford a fee; Maggie May would say that was all right, she couldn't expect to be paid for speaking until she knew how to do it better. To Kip she declared that sooner or later she'd have to think up another lecture, for she could never bear to take money for telling about her father.

So, two or three evenings a week, the female wowser would put on her best blue dress, and take the blue hat with the blue-bells out of the tissue paper wrappings; she would stick her curling-tongs into a smoky old kerosene lamp, and make a little friz along the front of her bobbed hair, and put a tiny trace of rouge on each cheek—because she got so pale when she was frightened. Some one would come in an automobile, and Maggie May would go out to it, with Kip following, carrying her wrap and handbag. He would enter a church and sit patiently through a lecture which he knew almost by heart, and note the places where there was applause, and where there was laughter, and try to think of possible improvements.

The first time Kip heard this lecture he thought his wife was the most eloquent speaker he had ever listened to. When he heard it

the second time, registering the same emotional effects at the same places, he was bewildered, and decided that she must be a great actress. After he had heard it five or six times, he had become professional in his attitude, and realized that lecturing is a business like anything else. It was a somewhat alarming outlook—for in one of Maggie May's books there was mention of a famous temperance orator who had delivered one address more than three thousand times! Could Kip stand to hear about the elder Chilcote that often?

VI

The spread of the feminist movement had produced a new career for a few selected males, that of husband-secretary-manager to a platform celebrity. Kip would carry on Maggie May's correspondence, and keep track of dates, and collect her fees when there were any, and clip the comments in the newspapers, and mark the favorable passages. On the evening of the lecture he would put on his best clothes, and carry her wrap, and in wet weather her umbrella and rubbers, and shield her from the rain, and from too grateful members of the audience. He would take her home after the ordeal, and chat with her about what this person had said, and how that one had looked, and whether the lecture was going as well as usual. He would be devoted and admiring in private, and dignified and impressive in public, and would be known as the husband of the lovely Mrs. Maggie May Tarleton; now and then, behind his back, people would refer to him as Mister Maggie May Tarleton.

There was only one obstacle to this ultra-modern idyl—the fact that Kip had been brought up in the Southern tradition, which made it a humiliation to a man for his wife to earn money, and intolerable for him to depend upon her. Kip could never be happy as Mister Maggie May Tarleton; each morning after, no matter how successful the lecture had been, he would search the "help wanted" columns of the newspapers, and write letters beginning: "In response to your advertisement in this morning's 'World' I beg to state—"

Until one day a scintillating idea occurred to him. "Maggie May, I wonder why I couldn't get a job in the prohibition service."

The young wife stared at him. "The prohibition service? Where is it?"

There was something ironic in that question. One might indeed ask where it was, out here on Long Island! "It's supposed to be all around us," he replied. "I saw in the paper that men had been

discharged from the service for this or that, so they must be engaging new ones. Why shouldn't I take a chance?"

"Oh, but Kip," she said, "that must be dangerous work!"

"There might be danger in it, I suppose. But somebody has to do it, and people who feel as you and I do can't stand back because of fear. It seems to me the government needs men who believe in the law, and won't sell out; I'd like to prove that there is one such man."

Maggie May continued to gaze at him, with a mixture of emotions in her face. The "prohibition service" was to her a vague and far off abstraction; she had said a hundred times that it ought to be strengthened, but never had it occurred to her that it might be strengthened by the addition of her precious husband! "Kip, dear," she said, soberly, "I had been hoping you'd go on helping me."

"Helping you? Of course, honey. Haven't I been doing everything I could think of?"

"But I mean a regular job. If I am really successful, there'll have to be somebody to go with me."

"You can count on me most of the time; but I'll have to have some work of my own, too."

She knew there was no use to argue the point. She had been hoping he would grow into her job without realizing it, and would gradually drop his old notions. But here, evidently, was something which lured the adventurous male in him. "Well, what do you think?" he asked.

Her answer was to put her arms about him, and bury her face in his neck. "Oh, Kip, if anything were to happen to you, I'd die!"

"Don't worry, honey," said he. "From what I read about the service, my soul will be in greater danger than my body."

VII

What did one do in order to become a prohibition agent? Kip went in to New York, and looked up in the telephone book a list of departments under the heading, "U. S. Government," and paid a visit to an office building, where a clerk answered his questions. At that time the service was still a branch of the Treasury Department, and had not been put under civil service rules. To obtain an appointment, you had to have the recommendation of your congressman or senator; if you succeeded in persuading one of these worthies that you were of sound political views, you would start at the munificent

salary of eighteen hundred and sixty dollars a year. This was according to the tradition of democracies, which pay their servants very small wages, apparently on the assumption that they will not be good for much.

Kip went away, pondering the problem of who might know his congressman, or either of the two senators from New York State. He was so little of a politician that he didn't know the names of these persons, nor even the number of his congressional district; he had to go to a public library and look these matters up. Noting that the congressman was a Democrat, he bethought himself of that Tammany police magistrate who had been his father's boon companion. He ascertained that in the interim Judge O'Toole had been promoted to a higher judicial level; he went to the new court, and sought his honor in his chambers after the closing hour, and made the discovery why Tammany Hall has such firm hold upon the denizens of Manhattan. It exists by doing small personal favors in exchange for large public rewards.

The rosy-faced, hearty old Irishman grasped Kip by the hand. "Pow Tarleton's son! Well, for cripe's sake! Of course I remember you! How's your old man?" For a moment Kip wondered if the judge thought his father was still alive; but then he realized that he himself was the object of this inquiry.

Kip said that he was all right, and told about his marriage and his baby. He listened to reminiscences about the Big Chief Powhatan. "Boy, that was a great old scout, I'm telling you!" said his honor. "I was talking about him with Pat Gilligan the other day. Pat is deputy commissioner of garbage-dumping now, and doing well, he tells me. I says, 'You can search me for what there is in that.' Says he: 'No, search the garbage!' How's that for a wisecrack?"

In due course Kip told what he wanted, and Judge O'Toole said he didn't know the congressman, but there wouldn't be much trouble about a little thing like that, but what the hell did anybody want to get into the prohibition service for? When Kip said because he believed in it, the judge thought it was the funniest thing he had ever heard; enough to bring the Big Chief back for a laugh! From what he'd heard, he said, Kip would be the only man in the service with that quaint idea. However, there was no accounting for tastes; he would give his friend a note to the district leader, who in turn would pass him on to the leader of his own district, who would fix matters with the congressman. "That's what an organization is

for," said he; "and if you're right with the organization, you're right with all New York."

Kip went away with his letter; and then bethought himself of Francisco X. Marin, Spanish importer of cheeses, who belonged to a Democratic club; and then of Mr. Fortescue, who had once held a political office. He called up these old friends, who welcomed him cordially, and insisted on his staying to lunch or to dinner, and asked all about his mother and his aunt and his wife and his baby. There was a great deal of human kindness in the world, it appeared; any former boarder of the Tarleton House—they were Southern Democrats to a man—was willing to rack his brains to think of the proper connections, and of letters to write and wires to pull, to help a young man get a chance to serve his country for a hundred and fifty-five dollars a month. When they heard it was in the prohibition service, they politely concealed their dismay; after Kip had gone, they said to their wives that of course it wasn't so strange in the case of Pow Tarleton's son.

The upshot was that the congressman whose district covered the eastern part of Long Island received several letters asking him to recommend one of his constituents for the prohibition service. He had never heard of this constituent, but it cost him nothing to dictate a letter, and he did it. Kip filled out a blank, in the course of which he stated that his last employer had been Mrs. Genevieve Fessenden, of Seaview—which wasn't such a large fib. Maggie May wrote to Cousin Jenny, who gladly wrote a letter of endorsement; and Kip sent this in, along with other letters, and then settled down to wait—as one learns to do when dealing with governments.

VIII

Maggie May's career was continuing to unfold. A young Jewish rabbi was spending his vacation in one of the towns where she lectured, and came up and shook her hand, and begged her to give the talk to the children of his synagogue in New York. Maggie May had never had anything to do with the Jews, and had no idea what a synagogue would look like, or how one behaved there; in truth, it was mixed up in her mind with a Mohammedan mosque. Nor was she sure it would be a good thing, professionally speaking, to make her metropolitan debut under such auspices. But Kip reminded her that New York was the largest Jewish city in the world, and whether its population voted wet or dry was a matter of

consequence. Moreover, Rabbi Hibschmann was the first person who offered a fee instead of expenses. The idea of getting twenty-five dollars for an hour's talk was truly inspirational, and Maggie May joined Saint Paul as an apostle to the Hebrews.

There was one embarrassment. She had been sure she could never bear to lecture about her father for money; but the young rabbi asked for that lecture. She had tried the experiment of leaving out some of the personal things, and found that it did not go so well. She would continue to try, in the course of her long career, but would never find anything to interest either children or grown-ups so much as the story of her girlhood home and what liquor had done to it. Maggie May's home had the charm which is attached to things far off and romantic; it had the still greater charm which is attached to large sums of money spent in elegant aristocratic ways. The very audacity of her action made it effective; people realized that a young woman would not reveal such things about her own father except under the influence of deep feelings.

The Temple Horeb was a large building of grey stone, and might have been a concert hall inside. On this particular evening it contained what Maggie May judged to be all the Jewish children of the upper West Side. She was dismayed to face such a throng; and still worse upset by the sight of four adult gentiles occupying seats in the front row. Roger Chilcote and Jerry Tyler had come with their ladies to witness the metropolitan debut of a female wowser!

Yes, the thoughtful person who sent newspaper clippings had not overlooked Roger; also, Mrs. Chilcote had written to her son, begging him to exercise the family authority, and keep his sister from disgracing herself and all of them. Roger had told Jerry what was going on, and it had appealed to the editor as a tremendous bit of humor. His all-seeing eye had noted an announcement of the lecture in a newspaper, and here they were, with Mrs. Tyler—or Miss Eleanor Follet, as she still called herself—and Mrs. Eileen Pinchon, the delicate French pastel blonde.

Maggie May had to keep her eyes from Roger's face and her mind from the thought of him. She would tell the story of their father as she had told it on the other occasions, and her brother would have to stand it as best he could. But family ties are strong, and she was in a state of painful emotion; this wrought-up state betrayed itself in her tones, and made her words even more moving to the audience. When she came to the exordium, in which she appealed to children to make up their minds now, that for the rest of

their lives they would never play with John Barleycorn, Maggie May was talking to the young Roger of her childhood; saying all those things she would have said to him, if fate had given her another chance. When she finished, there were other eyes than hers in the synagogue dimmed with tears. "By God," whispered Jerry Tyler to Roger, "there's another ugly duckling in your family!"

The editor of the "Gothamite" went off and wrote up that cultural event, in the style which had made his publication the delight of the smart set in a hundred cities from Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon. He began by a mock-apology for being found in such an evil place as a house of wowsers; he had gone there as bodyguard to a famous playwright, who was trying to save his sister from a life of shame. A terrible thing that a young woman, lovely and well brought up, married, and with a baby, should wander from the paths of good-fellowship, and be slipping into the morass of fanaticism. Jerry parodied the tone of Maggie May's talk, exhorting her with the same fervor she had displayed to the children of the Temple Horeb. He pictured the dreadful consequences of persisting in the paths of bigotry: her nose would grow pinched and red, her hair would lose its curl and her limbs their shape—until presently she would be seen upon the street wearing spectacles and blue stockings. "Turn back, turn back, dear little one, before it is too late!"

Maggie May, who was going into public life, had to learn to take blows as well as give them. She read through that issue of the "Gothamite," and found other jeers at prohibition, inspired by the editor's harrowing experience. One paragraph pointed out, among the evil results of the dry law, that drinking was becoming the fashion among women. "We saw a girl of sixteen pour down a whole tumbler of raw gin last night," said the "Gothamite." "Will our wowser friends account for that?"

Maggie May accepted this invitation, and wrote a letter to the editor, saying: "Perhaps you saw the girl of sixteen smoke a whole package of cigarettes. How do you account for the increase of smoking by women, when there are no laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco?" The magazine published this letter, and replied with its customary diablerie. The increase in the consumption of cigarettes was another consequence of prohibition—since all the clever advertising men had been diverted from singing the praises of "Haig and Haig" and "Mumm's Extra Dry," and set to inventing slogans for "Old Golds" and "Luckies." "Consult our advertising columns,"

said the "Gothamite"—"and don't fail to mention our publication when making purchases!"

IX

There was another person who had heard reports about this unusual lecture, and had come to judge it; an elderly gentleman with silvery grey hair stopping at his collar, and a face like a Giotto portrait. He came up and introduced himself as Dr. Ernest Craven, pastor of a Unitarian church in the vicinity. He wanted Maggie May to give this talk at his church settlement on the lower East Side. She had never met any Unitarians, and had the idea they were somehow alarming; but she liked this old gentleman's mild aristocratic countenance, and accepted his offer to drive her and Kip to their hotel.

On the way Dr. Craven explained that the audience he was offering her would be of a new kind. It was an "open forum," and after all lectures they were accustomed to have a question period; she would find it stimulating to encounter working-class intellectuals, whose forte it is to say exactly what they think. Maggie May said, somewhat anxiously, that she didn't know enough; to which Dr. Craven replied that lecturers generally pretended to know everything, and it would be a novel experience if she were to answer that she couldn't answer!

He discussed prohibition, in which he was a believer, but not a blind one, he said. The weakness of the propaganda was that it was so often negative; it forbade people to do a certain thing, but never stopped to inquire why they wanted to do it, nor attempted to provide them with substitutes. That was a new idea to Maggie May, and she asked what Dr. Craven meant. He pointed out that a law had been passed, abolishing at one swoop some twenty thousand saloons in New York city, and no one had stopped to consider whether these saloons had served other functions, besides that of places to get drunk in. They had been the only places where workingmen could meet their friends and chat about matters that interested them. Now the workers had no place to go; and yet people wondered why "speakeasies" were springing up wholesale.

"What could you have?" asked Maggie May; and the answer was, reading-rooms, and social centres where non-intoxicating drinks were served, and where people could bring their families and enjoy their leisure. A few church settlements were trying to provide such

things, but the workers in big cities were afraid of the churches, which didn't belong to them, and were tied to outworn creeds.

All this interested Maggie May, and she asked many questions. Dr. Craven pointed out that drink represented what the psychologists called a "flight from reality;" life was so cruel, so painful, that people couldn't stand it, but sought a few hours of oblivion, at any cost. We could never abolish the use of liquor, until we made reality into something people didn't want to run away from, as children "play hookey" from a badly managed school. "You know," said the clergyman, "the teachers of progressive ideas consider they have failed, unless they make school a place the child runs away *to*."

Dr. Craven came into the hotel for a chat. He told them that he was a Socialist; and they were surprised to hear an elderly clergyman put such a label on himself. They had the idea that Socialists, while discussing the overthrow of society, drank a great deal of beer, and were strongly opposed to prohibition. The clergyman answered that it depended on where the Socialists came from. Germans wanted their beer, and Latins wanted their wine; but if it was a Socialist of New England stock, or among the farmers of the middle West and the Southwest, he would probably be a Puritan—"exactly like you and your husband," said Dr. Craven, with the smile of an elderly aristocratic saint. "The Socialist movement would split on prohibition about like the population in general."

"But I read that labor leaders are demanding wine and beer," said Maggie May.

"As a rule, Mrs. Tarleton, you'll find those fellows are good Catholics; and you'll find they are taking their share of the rake-off of big business, the same as a district leader or a police captain."

Dr. Craven went on to explain that the radical was apt to put his emphasis on social causes and social remedies; but in the meantime, until he could put his ideas into effect, he had a personal life to live, and therefore the same need of temperance propaganda as everybody else. "A Socialist who drinks is just as miserable as any other kind of person. I know several of them, and it's heartbreaking to see a fine idealist going to pieces, because he hasn't had the firmness to stand against the cynicism and license of the time—which are, of course, symptoms of capitalist decay. That's why it would be worthwhile for you to talk to them, Mrs. Tarleton."

"But I'm not the right person, Dr. Craven, I don't know their language."

"I'm teaching it to you," said the old gentleman, with his placid

smile. "They call me a sky-pilot, and they'll call you a victim of the Jesus complex. They're in revolt against so many things, they can't always distinguish good from bad. But you ask them if they want their young people to grow up drunk or sober, and on that basis they'll listen to your story."

X

There was more to this conservation, and some of it even more startling to Maggie May and Kip. Dr. Craven talked in a quite matter of fact way about revolution and revolutionists. He was interested in the problem of justifying prohibition to people like this, because some day, he said, they would control the world, and then they'd have the liquor problem to deal with, no matter how much they might wish to ignore it meanwhile. He took from his breast-pocket a wallet, which proved to contain, not money, but clippings. "I carry a supply of ammunition," he said. "I'll give you something you may find useful, the first time you meet a radical who doesn't believe in prohibition."

He handed to Maggie May an article by Leon Trotzky, which he had cut from a Communist paper. "He is telling what happened when the Bolsheviks took power in Petrograd; how the mob began looting the wine-cellars of the aristocrats, and making themselves crazy with liquor. Trotzky sensed that as a move of the enemy. 'Some one was trying to consume the revolution in the flames of alcohol.' There was a Bolshevik sailor, named Markin, who had become his personal guard; and he tells: 'Markin instantly sensed the danger, and went to fight it. He guarded the wine stores; when it was impossible to guard them, he destroyed them. In high boots, he would wade to his knees in precious wines full of broken bottles. The wine flowed down the open street sewers into the Neva and stained the snow; tipplers lapped it up from the gutters. With revolver in hand, Markin fought for a sober October. Soaked to the skin, exuding the fragrance of the choicest wines, he would return home, where our two boys were waiting breathlessly for him. Markin beat off the alcoholic attack of the counter-revolution.' "

Dr. Craven told Maggie May to put that clipping into her handbag; it would come in useful when she was tackled by some "red" who had let the capitalist press confuse his thinking about the liquor problem. "You understand," he said; "Trotzky is of the extreme left, and so he's a sound authority."

It was startling to Maggie May and Kip to find a Bolshevik leader on their side; it was even more startling to be told that he was a "sound authority!" They had the idea that the Bolsheviks were terrible people; Maggie May had read about the nationalization of women, and the horror of it still clung to her thoughts about Russia. Also, she had read that the Bolsheviks had tried prohibition, and given it up. She asked the clergyman about this, and he explained that they had not been able to enforce it; Russia was such a vast country, and their organization at that time had been so weak. Now they had state manufacture and sale of vodka at high prices; but at the same time the government was doing the same thing as Mrs. Tarleton herself—educating people to the evil effects of alcoholism. They were teaching the children in the schools, and sending them home to teach their parents.

Said the clergyman: "I tell my people that when the Soviet government gets stronger, there will be a new movement to abolish liquor, and the world will see prohibition really tried for the first time. It is obvious that the only government that can prevent home-brewing is one that has communized the home."

To Maggie May that seemed the most bewildering statement she had ever heard. She told this elderly smiling saint that the home was the bulwark of American morality; to which he replied, "Suppose you have to consider it as the bulwark of American bootlegging?" When she wanted to know what would become of the children if the home was "communized," he invited her to ask where the city children of America were actually spending their hours. Children of the poor spent seven hours a day in a communized school, while those of the rich spent nine months of the year in boarding-schools and colleges. When they were sick they spent their time in hospitals, and when they were about to be born, their mothers did the same. They spent their Friday and Saturday evenings in moving picture palaces, and their Saturdays and Sundays rolling about the country in motor-cars. They ate many meals in restaurants, and bought cooked food in delicatessen shops. If you reckoned it up, you found that the community had most of the child's waking hours. When the elderly clergyman suggested that all that might mean new possibilities of happiness, Maggie May was so astonished that she kept him arguing until midnight, and Kip had to remind her that Dr. Craven might have a home of his own to which he sometimes retired.

XI

They were spending the night at the hotel, because Maggie May had business matters in hand for the next day. She had got the names of various prohibition organizations having offices in the city, and she set out upon a tour of these, taking her husband along for the moral support, so she said. Kip watched and listened attentively, and learned that a man can never be sure that he knows his own wife. Kip's wife visited the first place, and introduced herself to the administrator of the enterprise, and told him she was a supporter of the cause. She did not say: "I am an aspiring platform-speaker, and want you to know me, because you may some day employ me to lecture for you." That would have been Kip's idea of what to do, and when they came out, he asked why she had failed to do it. In reply, Maggie May explained to him a thing which she called "tact." Ladies do not ask for things directly, no matter what it is they want—whether a chance to save children from the Demon Rum, or something very important, such as becoming social lights in their community, and having their pictures published in the society columns.

"You will notice," said Maggie May, "that all these organizations are run by men. And men would not allow us to be straightforward—even if we knew how to be. If I go into a place and ask for speaking engagements, I am just a job-hunter. But you see, I go in grandly, and explain that I want to know what this organization is doing, and to have an opportunity to read its literature. I take out my purse and insist on paying for the literature. I say that I am educating myself so as to be able to work for the cause, and then mention casually that I have already given a few lectures. The administrator asks politely about this, and I tell him that I spoke last night in the Temple Horeb, and am scheduled to speak at Dr. Craven's forum. I'll ask the administrator's advice about this, and end up by inviting him to come and hear me. When I go out, with my nice, quiet husband carrying an armful of literature, I leave several persons feeling that here is a capable and intelligent woman, of whom it will be worth while to keep track."

"So that's the way you do it!" exclaimed Kip.

"That's the way my sex has done it all through the ages, and got what it wanted from men."

XII

At the end of a strenuous day the young couple rode back to their home, where two elderly ladies kept watch and ward over an entirely uncommunized infant. Maggie May spent an hour explaining to this young individualist how she was making the world safe for all boy-babies; only to discover at the end that the little savage was as selfish as ever, and howled as loudly when his favorite playmate handed him back to his grandmother.

Maggie May took her husband to their crowded little room, and seated herself upon the bed, and spread about her all the clippings containing comments of local newspapers, and the letters of thanks she had received from clergymen and church workers, and two or three photographs of herself which she possessed. "Now, Kip, come and help me. I want to prepare a circular about my lecture work." Applying the feminine methods which she had recently explained to him, she said, "Kip, darling, this is your work, too! I am so happy that we have a work we both believe in, and can do together!" So Kip was very happy, and proud of his wife, whom he escorted into such interesting adventures.

He knew a bit about circulars, because among his duties as hotel-clerk had been the preparing of printed programs for musical and other entertainments. He knew that you had to take a sheet, and paste things on the way you wanted them. He and Maggie May discussed this quotation and that, which sentence was the most effective, and whether the names of the persons quoted had better go at the beginning or at the end. The newspapers were, unfortunately, all local and obscure; but Maggie May said she would get better ones later, this was only a start. At the bottom she put: "For terms address"—which was the tactful way of suggesting that lecturers have to live. "It's time they paid me now," said Maggie May. "I've shown what I can do."

Winter was coming, and cold rains were falling, and winds were blowing under the cracks of a badly made door, and making an old stove to smoke. Roger Chilcote Tarleton had already caught one cold in this too ventilated place—yes, the clergymen and others who wanted lectures would have to pay! Maggie May said she would print only a few circulars with the Seaview address; they would soon be moving to New York, the proper headquarters for lecture bureaus. Rabbi Hibschmann had told her she had made a hit with

the Jewish children; it was her secret hope to make a hit with Unitarians and Socialists, and even with bewhiskered Bolsheviks.

So next morning Kip took the amateur copy to the village printer, and explained the meaning of their amateur printing signs. The printer sent the photograph to the city, and had made what he called a "cut." So, after a few days, there was a packet of circulars—nothing sensational or startling like a circus poster, but dignified and well-bred, informing the world that Mrs. Maggie May Tarleton made a specialty of lecturing to the young in the cause of temperance, and pointing out the personal consequences of the drink habit. There was the counterfeit presentment of a female wowser, smiling forth, gentle and sweet, and showing no signs of the deterioration which Roger had feared, and which Jerry had foretold in the "Gothamite."

They mailed several copies of the circular to Dr. Craven and to Rabbi Hibschmann, and one to each of the prohibition executives, with a polite letter renewing the invitation to them to attend the forum lecture. They sent copies to the many ladies whose addresses Maggie May had gathered in the various churches, and wrote letters to some of them, asking that the circulars be passed on. "I'm betting on you!" said Kip; and he won his bet, for replies began to come right away, and most of the writers took note of the important item about "terms." The church people apologized for the straitened financial condition of the Lord's work, but at least they offered more than an automobile ride to the church and back!

XIII

The day came when Maggie May had to face the Unitarians and the Socialists and the Bolsheviks. The church settlement was on the lower East Side, and she and Kip were invited to dinner before the lecture. There were a dozen or more persons seated at a long table in what was called a "refectory," eating a meal of lentils and prunes from a plain oiled table, with paper napkins and other features of the simple life. They were strange humans to Maggie May, because they were ascetic, even saintly, in appearance, yet humorous and modern, with ideas of the advanced sort which startled and shocked her. Because she had an ordeal before her, she ate little; she sat and listened to the conversation of these radical saints.

Afterwards they took her to the hall used for the "open forum."

This was an institution unknown in Maggie May's part of the world, and the name conveyed to her a disturbing idea of irresponsibility. It was a part of Dr. Craven's religion that anybody who had serious thoughts on public questions should have a chance to say his thoughts to whoever wanted to listen, and then have his auditors question him, and pin him down, and "show up" his weaknesses, if there were any.

So here was a bare hall, with a platform, and rows of seats for six or eight hundred persons. When Dr. Craven led Maggie May to the platform, the seats were all taken, and she looked at the audience with anxious curiosity. There were workingmen with lines of suffering, the scars of the class war in their faces. There were old men, some with beards, who had dreamed of a better world, and were still pursuing that dream with feeble footsteps. There were students, and working boys who studied in night school, many of them Jews; they looked wise and critical in horn-rimmed spectacles. The girl students looked so much like the men that you couldn't tell which was which until they stood up and spoke. Maggie May sensed that most of this crowd would be prejudiced against her ideas; it was a time when she would need that tact which has helped women to survive all down the ages.

Dr. Craven introduced her with a few friendly words; and she came forward and told her audience, very humbly, that she had undertaken this responsibility only upon the clergyman's urging. She was young, and she came from a part of the country where the problems of great cities were unknown, and the storms of modern ideas seldom penetrated. "As I look at you, I realize that you have most of you had more experience than I; you know a lot about all sorts of matters of which I am ignorant. But it happens that I have had one very intense experience, which has given me deep convictions on one subject. Some of you may say that I am a fanatic about the liquor traffic; but I point out that there are many people all over the country who think as I do, and it may be useful to you to understand how a prohibition fanatic comes to be."

Proceeding upon Dr. Craven's statement, that most of this audience would consist of "radicals," Maggie May repeated his argument, that no matter what people might think about the future society and how to get it, they all had to live from day to day in this unlovely world as it was, and everybody had to choose between self-indulgence and self-control. Most of them had children, or would have them, and would have to decide what they were going

to teach these children about the use of liquor. She would tell them what drinking had meant to one child.

For an audience of children, Maggie May made her lecture into a story, telling them about the snakes and the mosquitoes, the "Cajuns" and the Negroes of Louisiana. But for this mature audience, her lecture became a study in the psychology of a victim of alcohol, and of a child who has such a victim for a parent. As she unfolded her experience, it became a little drama of the soul. A child groped in darkness, and gradually emerged into a reality of horror and suffering; a man cowered in shame, and never could or would face the reality of himself, or of what the child thought about him. Almost to the last hour of his life, the victim of alcoholism would not admit that he was a victim; he invented a thousand pretexts to deceive the child, and to deceive himself, and both of them had to play a game which the psychologists called the "flight from reality."

Looking at these serious, attentive faces, Maggie May confessed again her ignorance of political and social problems. "But I know," she said, "that you have the idea of changing the world, and making it over according to your desires; and I put it to you—how can any radical make a 'flight from reality?' If you seriously mean to change the world, the first thing is to understand it; you must have the courage to face it as it is, and not fool yourself. And surely nobody uses alcohol in order to see more clearly! Alcohol is something which might have been invented by persons who desired to keep the working people befuddled and unable to help themselves. Of course, I may be mistaken," added the lecturer, modestly. "If I am, some of you radicals will correct me, I hope."

XIV

The time for questions came, and the lecturer discovered that there were a great many persons in the audience who were eager to correct her. That was the purpose for which they attended "open forums"; the opportunity for even a minute or two of self-expression was their substitute for alcohol.

The first questioner was an eager youth who bobbed up and wanted to ask the speaker whether she had any belief whatever in personal liberty. Maggie May had heard that question before, and her answer was ready. We had to give up a lot of personal liberty when we began to live in cities. We had to obey traffic laws,

for example; and traffic alone was reason enough why society had the right to forbid people to get drunk. Society forbade the use of opium and cocaine, and Maggie May wondered why the opponents of prohibition never mentioned these invasions of "personal liberty."

There arose an exponent of "class consciousness," who resented the prohibition laws because they were enforced against the poor and not against the rich. Maggie May said, with a smile, "The poor ought to consider that a great service. If I wanted to get drunk and somebody stopped me, I might quarrel with the person, but it wouldn't change the fact that he is my benefactor."

There arose a lean-faced, bitter workingman, who wore a rubber collar and no tie, and looked as if he had tuberculosis. He said that he would like to ask a nice, refined young lady whether she had ever gone hungry for lack of the price. When Maggie May admitted she never had, he asked triumphantly, if a workingman had to live in hell, wouldn't he better be drunk than sober? This was an old Socialist saw, but Maggie May didn't know it. She said it depended on whether the workingman proposed to stay in hell. If so, of course he might as well be drunk. But if he meant to get out, then he'd need his brains.

There came an impatient young Communist, who wanted to make a speech and say that the question of prohibition was nothing but a red herring which the capitalist politicians dragged across the trail, to keep the workers away from real issues. The chairman stopped him, saying that Mrs. Tarleton was making the speeches. Maggie May answered tht of course politicians would try to fool the people; but nobody could get away from the liquor question, so long as liquor was in the world, and some human beings were making themselves a menace to society. Communists couldn't get away from the problem any more than capitalists; to prove it here was a clipping—and Maggie May proceeded to cite her Trotzky. It was in the days before the builder of the red army had been exiled by Stalin, and the young Communists were silenced by the testimony of their hero.

There arose an elderly lawyer, the author of a pamphlet which he desired to present to the speaker; it bore the pungent title of "Dry Rot." He asked, with sarcasm in his tones, whether Mrs. Tarleton really considered that we had prohibition now. Maggie May answered, of course not, else why should she be lecturing. The law wasn't enforced because the politicians didn't believe in it, and didn't want it. Even so, however, conditions were better than they had

been in the old days. Most of the saloons were gone, and you no longer saw so many drunken men staggering about on the streets. They had a little wrangle about this, which Maggie May said should be referred to the settlement workers, who spent their lives among the poor and saw the change.

So it went, one question after another; and Kip, patient husband-secretary-manager, sat in his seat on the platform lost in astonishment. Every time Maggie May answered a question, he was as much amazed as if it had been Baby Roger answering it. Where on earth did she get all this? Of course, he knew that she spent every spare moment studying books on her hobby; he knew that she had got hold of a book on Socialism, on purpose to understand these strange people, and figure out their attitude, and how best to defend her cause to them. But beyond all this was the crucial fact—that his wife was a wowser born!

Yes, Maggie May had the overwhelming impulse to save other people from the consequences of their ignorance and folly. She was sure that they were wrong, and that she was right, and so was entirely unchecked by fears as to their "personal liberty." Nor did she consider it too much trouble, trying to save them. On the contrary, that was the purpose of life, to build and save life; new generations kept coming on, and each one had to be taught all over again. If everybody pitched in and did his part, there would be no need for wowsers and fanatics; but because so many neglected their part, there was need of extra effort by those who understood and cared. If, while doing this double work, there should come signs of strain into Maggie May's voice, and traces of a frown upon her forehead—then would the editor of the "Gothamite" be justified in his dire prophecies. "Turn back, turn back, dear little one, before it is too late!"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN · *FEDERAL SERVICE*

I

KIP received notice that his application for appointment to the Federal prohibition service had been granted, and that he was to report for duty on the following Monday morning. He and his wife set out on a house-hunting job in New York, going high uptown where the rents were low. They found a six-room apartment within their income, and the furniture was brought in by truck, and the family settled in two or three strenuous days. Nearby was a little park, where Roger Chilcote Tarleton could go walking every day with his grandmother and his great-aunt. So far, almost two years, this precious youngster had managed to escape all the perils of home; and so long as he throve, his mother and father were free to go about their separate tasks of wowserhood.

At nine o'clock on Monday morning, Kip reported at Number One Park Avenue, and was ushered in to Mr. Charles J. Doleshal, deputy prohibition administrator for the New York district; a college man who had been a football star not so far back in history. He was solidly built and substantial, with coal-black hair and eyebrows, and a friendly smile. He stretched out his hand, remarking, "Good morning, Tarleton; welcome to our mad-house."

"Is that the way you feel about it?" replied Kip, somewhat taken aback.

"Wait till you've been here a few days. We have a hundred and forty-seven men to do a job which might be done by a hundred and forty-seven hundred. The public, which knows nothing about what we are doing, blames us for doing nothing. If we did more, the public would blame us for that. It's a great life if you don't weaken. Sit down."

"Thanks," said Kip, and took the chair which was indicated.

Said Mr. Doleshal: "The United States government has entered upon a war. It's a rum war indeed, if I may be excused for making a little pun. According to the custom of democracies, we have a skeleton of an army and no munitions; in this case we haven't even

made up our minds that we want to win the war. We shall have some years more of blundering, and of hypocrisy in high places. Meantime it's hard on the men of the skeleton army."

"Well, here's one more recruit," smiled Kip.

"What is your reason for entering the service?"

"I believe in prohibition."

The young administrator looked at him with curiosity. "We don't often hear that. For my part, I don't believe in it much. I was having a comfortable time, detecting big income tax dodgers, and making it necessary for them to appeal to politicians to avoid paying penalties. Then one day my chief said to me: Go up to New York and help enforce prohibition; so here I am. It's a job, and if you have any suggestions whereby a hundred and forty-seven men can do the work of a hundred and forty-seven hundred, don't fail to let me have them."

"I'm afraid I'm not a genius," said Kip, "but I'll do my share of work."

"You are a better type than we usually get, Tarleton. The politicians furnish our personnel, and the chief raises rows about it in Washington, but it does no good. We can never tell who is selling us out, and the task of having everybody watch everybody else does not add to our efficiency."

"You will find that I'm honest," said Kip, earnestly; "and willing to work."

"If you do your duty," said Mr. Doleshal, "it may be two weeks before I have a complaint that you have held somebody up, or sold out, or what not. There will be three wops and two kikes coming to swear that you demanded bribes. Or maybe you'll complain to me about one of the other men, and I'll have the task of deciding which of you is lying. I'll do my best, but I say in advance, if I make a mistake don't blame me too hard, because it always happens when democracies go to war. I was in the World War, and it was the same—only we knew we wanted to win that."

The young executive proceeded to give the new recruit his instructions. "You'll start out as a 'buy man.' I'm going to turn you over to Abe Shilling, an experienced agent, who will teach you the ropes. Our men work in pairs, so you'll stick to him for a while. It's your duty to get the evidence, and turn it in promptly. You will report for duty at two in the afternoon, and work until about eleven. You have dress clothes?"

"Yes, sir."

"A part of your work will be in the cabarets and night clubs. You've been about town, I suppose—I mean, what is called fashionable life?"

"I've seen enough to make out, I guess," said Kip.

"That's one of our troubles," explained Mr. Doleshal; "not many of our men look right in evening dress, so we can't get into the more expensive places, and the public think it's because we favor the rich. However, you start with Abe and learn; he's been with us three years, which constitutes him a veteran, and I have good reason to think he's straight. A bit of a roughneck, as you'll see, but he's been very successful, and if you take his orders and make note of everything he tells you, you'll soon get to know the ropes."

II

Kip was provided with various appurtenances of his new office: an identification card, known as a "pocket commission," bearing the eagles which symbolized his country, and a photograph of himself which was taken for the purpose. "United States Treasury Department: Bureau of Prohibition: These presents witness that Kip Tarleton is regularly appointed and duly commissioned," etc. Also he would wear, inside his coat, a large shield, in those days made of dark bronze. He would carry with him a note-book and a fountain pen, for the entry of memoranda in ink; also a few small bottles with corks, and an eye-dropper—the most convenient device for collecting samples of liquor required by law. Finally, there was a manual of instructions which he was set to study, telling him his duties and his rights, and what he was to do in a variety of emergencies.

"Abe" came in, and shook hands with his new apprentice, and looked him over critically. The "buy man" had been brought from one of the ghettos of Russian Poland at the age of two, and his name was Schillinski, or something like that, so he told Kip in a mood of confidence; now he was an English shilling, but would have preferred a name of American mintage, say Two Bits. He was thirty years of age, rather squat, but solidly built, and "packed a good punch," he declared. He had a broad, rather flat nose, but none the less Jewish; an amiable Jewish countenance, with rosy cheeks and thick substantial lips; a cynical disposition, with a string of "wisecracks" to meet every emergency that could arise in daily intercourse with hundreds of persons. In short, he was a repre-

sentative New Yorker, and as he studied Kip's earnest face and queer, puzzled frown, he decided that this was some new kind of "bird."

He took the "bird" under his wing, and led him forth. When they got to the street, he produced a typewritten list of names and addresses. "These here are places that have been complained about," said he. "Old maids write in, and preachers, and sore heads, and guys that wanted a rake-off and didn't get it. Of course this ain't Federal work by rights, but the cops won't do it, so we have to. I'll do the talking, and you listen and get wise. When you get a drink, taste it good, so you can swear it's real."

"But how will I know?" asked Kip.

"Hell! Don't you know liquor when you taste it?"

"I've never tasted it," confessed Kip.

The other stopped short in his tracks, and his amiable face wore a frown. "What you giving us, kid?"

"It's the truth."

"But then, how do you expect to be a buy man?"

"Well, I didn't know what I was to be."

The other burst out laughing, and wanted to know where Kip was raised. Kip told him right here on the Island of Manhattan, in the west twenties. When the other persisted in expressing astonishment, Kip explained: "You see, my father was a drinking man, so I let it alone."

"Oh, I see," said the other. "But then—do you think you can carry it?"

"I don't know. I can try."

"Well, buddy, we'll have to invent some spiel for you, so you won't drink but a sip or two. You won't have no trouble to learn the taste."

They were over on Third avenue, under the elevated railway, and passed a stationery store. "That's our place," said Abe. "You see them two guys comin' out? They been wettin' their whistles."

The two agents walked on for a block or so, and then turned back, and went in to the store, a little crowded place with cheap magazines and a supply of paper and pencils for children. To the woman in charge Abe said: "Chilly weather, ma'am. We're looking for something to warm us up."

"We don't sell nothing," said the woman, suspiciously.

"Sure, I know," said Abe. "But I'm a friend of Captain Schmitty's, and he put me wise." Abe explained to Kip afterwards

that he carried in his head a list of the police captains and district leaders. "I done work around here last election, your husband ought to know me."

"My husband is dead."

"So? Well, Captain Schmitty told me to ask for Jake."

"He's my oldest boy."

"Jees, it's a wonder how young you ladies keep. I thought you was his wife. This is my friend, Mr. Applegate, Mrs. Weinstone. He's a regular guy, and any time he comes in, you let him have your best, none o' this bathtub stuff."

"I don't sell no bathtub stuff," said Mrs. Weinstone. "In fact, I don't sell nothing. Only when it's a gentleman friend——"

"Sure, I know, Mrs. Weinstone. You gotta be careful where you go these days. A friend o' mine was in a joint the other day and they sold him liquor with some o' this here poison stuff that the government puts into it. It's terrible, what they give people to drink, ma'am, I dunno how we're goin' to stand it—"

So Abe rattled on; Kip found in due course that it was regular showman's patter, designed to keep his victim from examining him too closely. Half automatically the woman opened the back door, and ushered these two into a little home-made saloon, with a bar made of packing boxes covered with oilcloth. Behind it stood a slinky-looking youth of twenty or so. "Two whiskies," said Abe; and Jake produced a bottle from under the counter, and poured a couple of drinks. No longer were they allowed to do their own pouring, as in the good old generous days! Abe took his glass, and lifted it to Kip's, and said "Here's how!"—while Mrs. Weinstone's son continued to eye them inhospitably, saying nothing.

Kip took his first mouthful, and started to swallow it, whereupon a strange thing happened: the stuff seemed to explode in his throat; it hit him a blow under the roof of his mouth, and the fumes of the explosion came out through his nose and his eyes and his ears; he was seized by a paroxysm of coughing, and the greater part of the mouthful was sprayed out upon the floor of the home-made bar-room.

Abe grabbed his friend and hit him on the back, to restore his equilibrium. To save the situation he exclaimed: "What the hell is this? What kind o' stuff you sellin' us, bo?"

"The stuff's all right," said Jake, aggressively. "What's the matter with the stuff?"

"Jees, it's terrible! You raise it in the kitchen sink?"

"I'm tellin' ya, fella, that there is first class stuff, it jest come off the boat. Why lookit, I got the wrappin's it come in." Jake reached down behind the boxes, and produced a straw "overcoat" for a liquor bottle. "You kin smell the salt water on it!" he exclaimed.

"Little Cinderella!" exclaimed Abe. It was a signal agreed upon, meaning that Kip was to get to work. In spite of the paroxysm of coughing, Kip staggered a few steps, and turned his back to both the bar and the front entrance, and got out a bottle, and with the eye-dropper took some of the liquor from the glass, not without trembling of the hands and spilling. Meanwhile, Abe was leaning over the counter, peering behind it at a row of bottles, and examining the wrappings. "Say, bo," said he, "do you know, that straw don't smell like no salt water to me. You know what it smells like?"

"What?"

"Like a Raine's law sandwich."

"Sandwich? What ya mean?" demanded Jake.

The genial Abe laughed whole-heartedly. "Would ya believe it, the kids grow up here in New York and they dunno what a Raine's law sandwich is! When I was a kid, if you wanted a drink on Sundays, you had to buy it in a restaurant, so all the saloons had a sandwich they kept for the purpose of bein' a meal."

"Well, there ain't no fake about this," said Jake, glumly. "I know the guy that gets this stuff, and it was out in Rum Row last week. I know the fella that brought it in on his boat."

"I know, buddy, but somebody opened it before you saw it. I ain't sayin you had a hand in it, but man, there's somethin' queer in that stuff, believe me." So the genial "buy man" went on gossiping, until Kip returned to his side, wiping his lips, and setting the empty glass down on the bar. Abe paid a dollar for the two drinks, and said, "So long, buddy," and out they went into the winter air and falling snow. "By heck!" said Abe. "That wasn't such a bad stunt a-tall. We might take that for our regular racket. You suppose you could bust out like that every time?"

"I can't imagine doing anything else," was Kip's reply.

III

They walked on for a block or two, and then Abe took the bottle and marked it with a name, place and date, and he and Kip put their initials on it. They entered the data into their note-books,

including the cost of the drinks, which the office would refund to them. Then they set out for the next place on the list, and meanwhile Kip asked questions. "When will those people be arrested?"

"I dunno. The Department of Justice does the prosecuting. We have to swear to a complaint—that's all our part."

"But we appear in court against them some day, don't we?"

"Maybe so; maybe not. Most likely they'll plead guilty."

"When will it be decided?"

"Oh, maybe six months from now, maybe a year."

"Good Lord! As long as that?"

"The calendar is crowded, and they can't get to 'em. Now and then they have what they call a 'bargain day,' and a bunch of 'em comes up and pleads guilty, and they give 'em fines, and maybe suspend the sentences."

"That don't sound very effective," said Kip.

"I know," said Abe, "but that ain't your business. Your job is to get the evidence, and leave the rest to them that has been put over you at a higher salary."

So they went over on Second Avenue, to what seemed an empty store with the curtains down; but there was an entrance through a side-door, and Abe worked his "spiel," and Kip worked his "racket." He had no difficulty in "busting out" as desired; he staggered away and dipped a sample of the liquor, while Abe denounced its quality, and made himself unpopular by comments on the price. They "got away" with that, and in due course they got away with three or four more efforts. Until at last, emerging on the street, Kip suddenly "busted out" in a new way. "Gosh, I feel queer!" he said, and put his hand to his forehead.

"What's the matter, buddy?" asked Abe. "Stuff goin' to your head?" He took Kip's arm protectively.

"Yes," whispered the youngster. "It's coming to my head—" and suddenly he realized that it was coming even farther, and made a bolt for the gutter, availing himself of nature's most speedy remedy. Spectators passing by gazed at him pityingly, and Kip was moved by shame, and hurried out of the way as quickly as possible.

"That's all right," said Abe, sympathetically. "Don't worry, old sport, you'll get used to it." Seeing that Kip was still dizzy, he led him to a drugstore. "What you need is a bite to eat," he said. "A guy can't even smell that much alcohol on an empty stomach."

But Kip said, no, he couldn't eat just now; he'd rest a minute

or two. So they sat down at the drugstore soda-fountain, and Abe said to the clerk, "Wait a moment, bo, my friend wants to rest, and then we'll have a conversation with you." After a bit he signalled the soda-jerker to a corner of the store and said: "That there buddy of mine don't feel so good, and can't you let us have a drink?" The other replied, they didn't sell liquor except on prescription; to which Abe replied, "Oh, come off, bo! A friend of mine bought some here last week, and he told me it was the real stuff."

"Who was it told you?"

"Jack Graham's his name."

"Never heard of him."

"Well, it was the boss that sold it. But you call up Captain Peabody, and let me talk to him, and he'll tell you I'm all right. But don't sell me none of that hair-tonic stuff, nor ginger jake, like they sell you in the place across the street, because I'm a guy that's particular about his liquor, and I'm scared of the stuff the government is putting into the alcohol. Why, bo, they tell me that nowadays—"

So Abe went on with the standard conversation; until the clerk took them behind the door into the prescription department, and poured them two glasses of whisky. "Just sip that," said Abe to Kip, "and see if it ain't what you need." Kip sipped it, but it didn't seem to be what he needed, and he said so feebly. "But, kid, that's good stuff," insisted Abe, who had drunk his, and was smacking his lips. "That's the way it comes out of a government bonded warehouse. Can't you get it down?"

"No, I don't want any more," said Kip.

"Well, it'd be too bad to throw it away. It's what you need, and you'll be sorry it ain't inside." Abe paid for the drinks, and then remarked: "I guess I better save it for that kid. He'll feel better by and by, and miss it." To the surprise of the soda-jerker, he drew a small bottle from his pocket, and took out the cork, and holding it between two fingers, proceeded to pour the glass of liquor—still keeping up his solicitous conversation to Kip. The look of anxiety on the clerk's face grew deeper every moment, but he couldn't think what to say, and Abe tucked the bottle into his pocket and thanked him—never stopping the rapid conversation for a moment until the two were outside again.

Then he said: "Jees, kid, that was a better racket than the other one. You reckon you can stay sick the rest of the afternoon?"

To which Kip replied again that he couldn't imagine doing anything else!

IV

"The first day is always the worst," said Abe Shilling, at the end of the ordeal. "You'll get used to it, and it won't seem so bad."

So Kip with a headache took a subway express-train, and after half an hour of roar and rattle, reached his home at midnight, and told his wife about the part which had been assigned to him in the war for prohibition. A look of horror came upon her face. "But, Kip! You can't do *that!*"

"But I have to, honey."

"But you can't! You can't! It's not to be thought of!"

"Listen, Maggie May. It won't be so bad tomorrow, because the other fellow and I have worked out a system—"

But there was no getting Maggie May to listen to "systems" about liquor-drinking. "You can't do it, Kip! I tell you I won't stand it! If you could only see yourself—how terribly you look!"

"It was bad today, I admit; but when I've got used to it—"

"Used to it, Kip? What are you saying? When you've got used to it, you'll be a drinking man!"

He looked at her with the puzzled frown which made the horizontal wrinkles across his forehead. "You mean—I might get the habit?"

"Why, of course, Kip! Where is your mind?" She hated to say it to him, but in a crisis like this all barriers went down. "Have you forgotten your father?"

He laughed. The idea sounded absurd to him. "What a thing to say, Maggie May! As if I didn't know what I'm doing!"

"Of course you know; but what difference does that make—if you go on doing it? Is your flesh and blood different from any other man's? Are your nerves made so that narcotics don't affect them? If you put poisons into your system, they will poison you, the same as anybody else."

"But, honey, somebody has to get the evidence!"

"It can be somebody that hasn't got your heredity behind him! Or it can be somebody that has already got the habit, and learned to 'carry it,' as they say. It doesn't have to be my husband."

"It's an important work, Maggie May, and it takes men who can be trusted. It's just as Mr. Doleshal said today, it's a war, and we

are the beginnings of an army. I've enlisted, and I can't turn yellow."

"Kip, that's all very well for picturesque talk—"

"But don't you know it's a real fight? Haven't you been urging people to go into it? And didn't you realize that evidence of law-breaking has to be got, if the law is to be enforced?"

It was the truth that she hadn't realized what was going on: the government actually hiring large numbers of young men, and sending them out to spend the day drinking liquor! It seemed a terrible thing, a contradiction of all she wanted the government to do; especially to her own husband! But what could she say? How could she meet the challenge to her sincerity? Why, in war-time, should other men be sacrificed, and one woman's man stay behind?"

"Kip," she whispered, in a failing voice, "if you go on with that work, I'll never have another happy moment in my life."

"But, honey," he said, "be sensible. Listen to me." He drew her down into a chair. "I was taken by surprise at the beginning. But now we've worked out a system, and I don't have to drink a drop. I'm supposed to be sick; I take the stuff into my mouth, and then spit it out again. It can't hurt me if I don't swallow it, can it?"

"I don't know, Kip. I hate the very smell of it, the thought of it. It's on your breath now—can you imagine what it means to me to smell it on your breath?" ("The lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine!")

"Of course, it isn't pleasant; but no war is." He saw his only refuge in the use of military language. "I promise you, dear, I'll never like it. If I find I'm learning to like it the least little bit—"

"You'll promise to tell me, Kip! You won't try to hide it, the way Papa did! You'll come to me, and let me help you?"

There was all the terror of her early lifetime in Maggie May's voice; and Kip swore that he would do what she asked. He knew he wasn't permitted to see anything funny about it; there must not be the tiniest trace of a smile on his face. But when he got into a room alone, he began to chuckle—silently and carefully—he laughed until he had to sit down. The idea flashed over him—what would Roger Chilcote say, if he should find out about that day's adventures! Roger, who had so many times been heard to declare it as the main ambition of his life, to get his prim and proper young brother-in-law thoroughly soused, stewed, pickled, piffled, pifflicated, loaded, ossified, bunned, slopped, fiddled, frazzled, corned, jiggered,

jugged or jagged! Imagine what the brilliant editor of the "Gothamite" would have made of it; the story of a sainted young wowser, who had been carrying his wife's wraps to Sunday school temperance lectures, and who took fire from her eloquence, and enlisted in the army of the Lord, and was sent out on a salary of six dollars a day, commissioned to spend eight hours of his time conscientiously visiting saloons and speakeasies, blind pigs and blind tigers, sample-rooms and barrel-houses, dives and doggeries, to imbibe unlimited quantities of substances carefully specified in the Volstead act: "alcohol, brandy, whisky, rum, gin, beer, ale, porter, and wine, or other beverages containing one-half of one percent or more of alcohol"—which of course included booze and hooch, moonshine and applejack, red-eye and rot-gut, corn-juice and forty-rod, eye-opener, phlegm-cutter and corpse-reviver, to say nothing of highballs and cocktails, fizzes and punches and juleps and cobblers, rickeys, sours, shrubs, and smashes, not overlooking such recondite native devices as horses' necks and Mamie Taylors, Tom-Collins and Tom and Jerries, bishops and locomotives, stone-walls and hari-karis, whisky-daisies and brandy-crustas, golden-slippers, blue-blazers, black-stripes and white-plushes!

Kip had sworn one solemn vow to his wife, and he now swore another to himself: that never, never, so long as he lived on this earth, was Roger Chilcote or Jerry Taylor going to find out what had happened to him as a "buy man" in the Federal Prohibition service!

V

The second day was better, as had been promised. Abe and Kip continued to work their sickness "racket," and it was reasonably efficient—the only trouble being that after a time it got to be a trifle depressing. Could it be true, as an eminent psychologist has maintained, that when you go through the actions of an emotion, you feel the emotion? Or could it be, as physiologists maintain, that alcohol does not have to be taken into the stomach, but can be absorbed through the tissues of the mouth. Certain it was that Kip began to feel queer again, and had to sit down more than once on government time. Also, he got a little sick at heart now and then; a disadvantage of this particular "racket" was that the whisky-sellers got sorry for you, and then you got sorry for them. They weren't altogether bad people, apparently, and it seemed un-

kind to take advantage of their kindness. However, Abe pointed out that if they had whisky for sale, they'd sell it to well or sick, provided they were sure the person was not a spy or an agent. Anyhow, it was your job, and no use to get sentimental about it.

They entered a place where they ran into some embarrassment, because the man recognized Abe and greeted him—but evidently not as a "Fed"; no he was some old-timer, a friend of the family, and asked about "Lizzy" and "Ikey," and tried his best to give the pair a drink. But the older man said no, they were both on the wagon, and when they got outside he said to Kip: "I guess we'll just mark that place 'closed.' You know how it is, that guy is a friend of my brother's, and you can't turn in somebody that you know real good."

"Gee, I wouldn't know what to say about that," said Kip.

The other answered promptly, "You don't have to say nothing. Just wait till some day they send you to raid a friend of yours, and then I'll do as much for you." So Kip took another step down from his pedestal of high principles. He thought of the rascally old Tammany judge who had recommended him for appointment; he thought of the jolly Mr. Marin, and Mr. Gwathmey, and Mr. Fortesque. Suppose he should be called upon to raid the cellars of some of these elderly topers!

And then, late in the afternoon, another educational experience. They had entered a large speakeasy, which was running wide open, with no more concealment than a pair of old-style swinging doors. Nobody made any bones about selling liquor, and Kip and Abe worked their regular scheme, the former sitting at a table, with his friend bending over him solicitously while he dipped the liquor. But suddenly it was as if an avalanche hit them; Abe got a blow on the side of his head which sent him spinning, and Kip got another which knocked the "evidence" to the floor. He raised his arm to parry a second blow, and it landed on his chest, and smashed two more units of "evidence" in his breast pocket. Abe was up in a moment, hitting lustily, and Kip backed him up as well as an unskilled man could do. From somewhere, they had no chance to find out, several men were onto them, and they had to wage a running fight with very lively running.

When they got to the street and took stock of themselves, Abe had an ear bleeding and a coat ripped, while Kip had what would turn into a "shiner," to say nothing of a stream of whisky running down inside his shirt, all the way to his shoes. "Holy smoke!" said the younger man. "How did that happen?"

"They had a guy on watch, and he spotted us."

"Can't we have that bunch arrested?"

"We can, but we wouldn't get much out of it. You see they've got a drag with the cops, or they'd never be runnin' wide open like this. The cop'd tell you to swear out a complaint. But in the first place, maybe the guys that hit us couldn't be found. The one that sold us the booze didn't mix in, you noticed."

"I didn't have time to notice."

"Well, you gotta learn to, if you're goin' into court. The guy that does the sellin', he knows he's in bad, so he don't pull the rough stuff, as a rule; he leaves it for the bouncer, and the porter, and some of his friends. You can't prove who it was, and if you bring them to trial, you got a Tammany judge, and they got a dozen witnesses to swear you started to smash up the place, and the papers make it into another story about Federal dry raiders runnin' wild and assaultin' peaceful citizens. They don't let us buy men carry arms."

"What do they expect us to do?" wondered Kip.

To which the other replied: "What you gotta do is pack a good punch, and leave a few marks, like I done on that fat guy that I flattened the nose of."

VI

It was hard for Kip to adjust himself to the fact that officers of the Federal government, wearing the shields of the government, and engaged in government service, could be attacked and beaten up by law-breakers, and be practically without protection from the police of the city. But New York State had repealed its enforcement act, and now Tammany Hall and its "cops" were clear of all responsibility. What prohibition meant to Tammany was the doubling or trebling of the amount of graft it could collect for "protection." In some of the higher-priced places, the "dollar-a-drink" palaces on Broadway, which could afford to pay liberally, the "protection" included a policeman in uniform standing by the bar!

A day or two later Kip got first-hand evidence as to the attitude of the police force towards the Federal service. They had on their list a place on what Abe called "Sixt' Av'nya"; it had once been a popular bar-room, and was now a popular "soft drink parlor," serving everything it had served in the old days—but in different glasses.

"Lissen, old man," said Abe to the bartender, a young Irishman. "This here buddy o' mine is took sick, and he needs a bracer. Where can I get it?"

"Speakeasy round the corner," said the other. "Ask the cop."

"Aw, come off," said Abe. "I'm askin' you. A lot o' my friends get their drinks here."

"Yeah? They get ginger-pop, and milk-shake—"

"With a stick in it, bo?"

"With a straw in it."

"Aw, have a heart, fella."

"I dunno you."

"I got lots o' friends round here. Ask Sergeant Pete, he'll tell you."

"You know Sergeant Pete?"

"Sure I do."

There was a man sitting at one of the tables, with a teacup before him. The bartender snapped his fingers, to attract this man's attention, and he got up and came towards them. It was a type of face that Kip had learned to know—it might have been "Slip" Kerrigan, of the diamond stud and the green and purple striped tie. He looked them up and down, in the fear-inspiring fashion of detectives, and after a grim silence demanded: "Who're you guys?"

The menace in the tone told both Abe and Kip that their "spiel" had for some reason failed to "get across." "What you got to do with it?" demanded Abe.

"Don't get gay with me," said the other. "Take a good look, fella." He drew back the corner of a coat-lapel, and showed a gold-plated shield with a coat of arms, and the words, "City of New York," and underneath, "Detective."

"What about it?" demanded Abe, unabashed.

"I think you two guys look pretty much like a coupla fellers I'm looking for."

"That so?"

"Yeah, that's so."

"You got warrants fer them guys?"

"Don't need any warrants. Take 'em on suspicion." The detective stepped closer, and put out his hand to feel in back of Abe's trousers, on the side where the gun would be.

But Abe removed himself and his bottles. "Keep your hands off me!"

"What's that? Who do you think you are, fella?"

"I think I'm somebody you'll keep your hands off, till you show me a warrant."

"When we get to the station-house," said the detective, "I'll give you a warrant in the snoot. You're under arrest—get me? Walk along there."

He grabbed Kip by one arm and Abe by the other; whereat Abe said, wearily, "Lay off, bo. I gôt one too." He pulled back the lapel of his coat, and showed the large bronze shield, also with a coat of arms, and the words: "U. S. Government."

"Hell!" said the detective. "Why didn't you say so before?"

"You know dead right why I didn't say so."

"I'm sorry; it was a mistake."

"Naw, it wasn't no mistake, and you ain't a-breakin' your heart about it. You knew what we was doin'. You wanted to show us up to this here guy."

"You'll have a fat job provin' that," replied the detective, and went back to his table, and sat down to finish the whisky in his tea-cup. The bartender's face wore a wide Irish grin. That was sure enough "protection"!

VII

Abe and Kip took seats at another table, and discussed in low tones what they should do. They were balked, of course; there would be no more liquor sold in the place while they were near. It was a familiar trick which happened to Federal agents now and then—and of course it made them "sore," and anxious to punish somebody. "Can't we seize the liquor he's got behind the bar?" whispered Kip.

"Sure, but we ain't seen it sold, nor transported; they'd set up the claim they'd had it since before prohibition, and how we gonna disprove it. The office would give us hell for that."

But this was one of the times when Providence appeared to be on the side of the righteous. While Abe and Kip sat racking their brains for an idea, it happened that a messenger-boy entered the place, carrying a square package wrapped in brown paper. "Mr. Reinstein here?" he demanded of the bartender.

"No, he ain't here."

"Works here, don't he?"

"No, he's gone. Take it away."

Such was the unfortunate moment chosen by a gentleman dressed

in broadcloth of a fashionable cut to enter from the rear part of the establishment. He saw the messenger, and asked: "What's this?"

"Package for Reinstein," said the boy.

"I'm him," said the man—and indeed one might have guessed it, for he had on his finger one of the stones for which he was named.

He came forward; but the bartender exclaimed: "No, sir, that ain't for you."

"How do you mean, not for me?"

"It's a mistake, sir. Don't take it!"

There was warning in the tone, but the manager of the establishment was not quick enough to get it. He took the package, and after a glance remarked, "Sure it's for me." A moment later Abe was at his side.

"You're under arrest, Mr. Reinstein."

"Arrest?" echoed the other. "What do you mean?"

Abe showed the shield. "We're Federal men, and you're arrested for receiving liquor."

"This ain't liquor," exclaimed the man. He tried his best to keep the package out of Abe's reach; but while he was holding it behind him, Kip jerked it from his hand, and handed it to Abe.

The latter held it to his ear and shook it. "It listens mighty wet," he said.

"It's hair-tonic!" protested Mr. Reinstein.

"Tell that to the government chemist," said Abe; and took his man by the collar.

The proprietor looked about him desperately, and spied the detective, who had risen from his chair and come nearer. "Hey, Kelly!" he cried. "Can this man arrest me here?"

"Naw, he's gotta have a warrant," said Kelly.

"Warrant?" roared Abe. "I'll give you a warrant in the snoot!"

"Here now, you feller—" said the detective.

"Remember, we've got your name, Kelly; and you know it's no joke, interfering with Federal officers."

Kelly fell back, and Abe tucked the package of evidence under one arm, and took the proprietor by the sleeve. With Kip acting as rearguard, they moved out to the street. The disturbance brought a crowd quickly; but it didn't take long to pick up a taxicab, and they piled their victim in, and away they went.

The excitement was over then, and they had a nice ride, and time to chat and get acquainted. After they had ridden a couple

of blocks, Mr. Reinstein opened up, amiably: "See here, boys, this'll make a mean story in the papers, and won't do any of us any good."

"It'll do me a lot with my boss," said Abe, cheerfully.

"Be reasonable, my friend. I haven't done you any harm, and I might do you more good than your salary will."

"What's it worth to you?"

"Well, I've got five hundred with me—"

"Where's the rest?"

"I might make it a thousand, but I'll have to stop somewhere and get it."

"Lissen, Mister Man," said Abe; "this young fella has just joined the service—it's only his third day. He's a nice innocent kid that belongs to a church, so don't go exposin' him to no temptation." Turning to Kip, he added: "There, buddy, you've had your first business offer. Put 'em in your notebook, and add 'em up at the end of the year, and see how rich you might a' been!"

VIII

Each evening Kip would go home and tell these adventures to his wife and mother and aunt. He would see them eyeing him anxiously; but after they had convinced themselves that he was in full possession of his faculties, they would become interested, and would talk things out. It was a rare opportunity for a female wowser; giving her glimpses into a variety of matters about which the general public had no information.

Both Kip and Maggie May understood that a prohibition agent was a person held in low esteem by the ordinary American. A part of this could of course be discounted as wet prejudice. Manifestly, if people didn't want the law enforced, they wouldn't like the enforcers. "No thief e'er felt the halter draw with good opinion of the law." Also, beyond doubt, a part of the agent's low repute was justified by his character, and that of the politicians who had got him his appointment. But suppose you did believe in the law, and were dealing with a prohibition agent who did his duty—then what were you going to think about the man and his job?

It was certainly unpleasant to go about deceiving people and taking advantage of them; Kip never would feel entirely comfortable about it, any more than about the stuff he took into his mouth. But what was to be done? These people were breaking the law, and making

enormous profits out of it; and how was the business to be broken up, except by getting legal evidence? The doctrine that the end justified the means was one which people as a rule would repudiate, without thinking very much about it; it was called Jesuitism, which was sufficient to damn it. But try the experiment of asking: what *else* could justify the means, except the end? Why did anybody do anything, except that he wanted to accomplish something?

Everybody disapproved of war, in theory; but everybody wanted things which could only be got by war, and so they went to war. They employed spies, and these spies practiced upon the enemy the same arts which prohibition agents practiced upon the bootleggers; then it was called patriotism. The patriotic armies would shoot and stab, they would blow up and poison the enemy wholesale, and people would say, yes, it was terrible, but when we had won, the peace would be worth the cost—the end would justify the means.

Maggie May, the wowser, wanted liquor banished from the country; and to do that she was willing to get evidence against law-violators, and send them to jail. If that meant that the government had to hire young men and set them to drinking liquor—well, it would be like sending them to be shot in the war. But was it really necessary? Later on Maggie May found out about this; she learned that it was a blunder, caused by the indifference or hostility of those who had charge of prohibition enforcement. Any city policeman who came upon reasonable evidence of law-violation, could get what was known as an "information and belief" warrant, enabling him to make a search to get further evidence. But the Federal courts refused to issue warrants on such a common-sense basis; they insisted upon having complete evidence prior to the search. Kip and Abe were required to stand up before a judge, and raise their right hands, and swear that they had purchased liquor, and tasted it, and knew that it was liquor. Congress, of course, might have changed that law, and saved Kip and Abe, and hundreds of other young "buy men." Could it be that legislators who voted dry and drank wet thought that "buy men" were like themselves, and enjoyed swilling bad liquor?

Of course there would be times when prohibition agents would have to drink; they would have to make friends with bootleggers and rum-runners, and pose as men-about-town and "sports." Maggie May, the fanatic, would consider such men as soldiers, giving their lives to save thousands of other young men from the liquor

demon. But surely the nation had a right to demand of its military leaders that it should sacrifice no more lives than necessary!

But what was actually happening? Kip spent his days trapping law-violators, and not one in a hundred of these persons desisted from crime for more than a few days. The office would send agents to arrest the offender, and his rich backers, the bootleg rings, would put up the bail money, and he would return to his old stand. Six months or a year later he would be summoned to the United States Attorney's office, and listen to a proposal for a compromise; he would attend a "bargain day" in a Federal court, enter his plea of guilty, and pay a fine of a hundred dollars—which might equal his profits for a day—or possibly for a week. He might even demand and get a "suspended sentence"—which meant that he wouldn't have to pay the fine until Kip and Abe caught him a second time!

The Federal system of law-enforcement was now in the position of a manufacturer who had increased his orders for raw material by several hundred per cent, but failed to add new machines in his plant, or to hire new workingmen; so the raw material was piling up in his warehouse, until his business was clogged and choked. The government had passed a law which required some fifty thousand new arrests every year; but it hadn't added a single new court to take care of these cases, nor a single new judge, nor clerk, nor bailiff! Here in this district where Kip worked, covering the City of New York and a crowded territory around it, prohibition enforcement was able to command the time of one court for one-third of its few working hours! And that was called testing the Volstead act, and the possibility of prohibition!

District Number Two of the service included the whole of Greater New York, the state of New York for a hundred and twenty-five miles up the Hudson, the whole of Long Island, and the state of Connecticut. In this territory lived nine millions of people, a large percentage of them foreigners; and to repress the alcoholic cravings of this population, the government was employing about a hundred and fifty men—adding half a dozen more now and then, in a spasm of determination. Half of this force was occupied in handling permits for the purchase of alcohol for industrial use; so, to get evidence of liquor violations, of any and every sort, from the longshoremen's dives on the water-front to the fashionable country clubs in Westchester, from the sailors bringing bottles in their luggage to the fleets of trucks making connection with "Rum Row"—for

all this there were seventy-five men! And then every day you would read in the wet press of New York: "Prohibition is a failure! Repeal the amendment!" All over the world men would hoot at the word, saying: "Look at what has happened in America!"

IX

"Saturdays," said Abe Shilling, "we start later and work till after midnight. That's the big time."

They were covering Sixth and Seventh avenues in the twenties and thirties, that same neighborhood where Kip had sought his father in the old days. Sandkuhl's was now turned into a grocery-store, and most of those old saloons survived only in the memories of sentimental topers. Replacing them were speakeasies, in back of undertaking-parlors, and barber-shops and whatnot; places to which you got access by tapping on a door, and being peered at through a slot-hole by a lynx-eyed guard. There was no free lunch; the sentimental topers sighed mournfully, remembering the pretzels and schweitzercase, the blutwurst and kartoffel salat, and pictures of reclining ladies with large, fat, naked limbs. Now there was nothing to hold a man, except his drink; he poured it down and called for another.

There were plenty of such places; some of them beginning to "put on dog," and require cards of admission—they were "clubs." There was an abundance of liquor to be had in them, with a wide variety of labels on the bottles, but a certain monotony in the contents. Kip knew, because he saw the chemists' reports; it didn't matter a bit whether the stuff was got in a "dime-a-shot dump" on the wharfside, or the swanky "Marseilles Club" on Park Avenue, with a canopy over the entrance and a magnifico in blue cloth and gold braid to escort the ladies from their carriages—always the chemists' report would read: "synthetic spirits made from alcohol, showing traces of diethylpthalalate, colored with caramel brought to taste and smell with whisky flavor." If it was "gin" your taste preferred, you would get the same denatured and "recooked" alcohol flavored with juniper water; or if you agreed with Jerry Tyler in his fancy for "Scotch," you might have the same denatured and "recooked" alcohol doctored with creosote compositions.

Yes, there was much drinking in New York six years after the start of prohibition; and it was terrible to contemplate—like all drinking, in every part of the world. But Kip knew the old days

in that same district—which all his "wet" friends seemed to have conveniently forgotten. He could say that in no section of New York was there one-third as much drinking as there had been in the old days. He knew that for a score of drunks he now encountered on a Saturday night, he would have seen two hundred while hunting for his father. He knew that arrests for drunkenness were cut in half, and also the number of pawnbroker shops; the children had shoes, and the men who used to come home to beat their wives now sat in the parlor monkeying with radio-sets.

The flood of liquor was coming back, heavier each year, as the rum-rings piled up their profits; but that flood had been checked for a year or two when the law was new, and it could be stopped forever, once the people were aroused and educated. So a female wowser would declare to her "church element"; and meantime her male wowser would learn to sip his synthetic alcohol and water without having it explode in his throat, or having it suddenly ejected from his stomach.

Yes, Kip would learn to behave like any other man-about-town. When, with the help of Abe's patter, he had got into a fake "club," and sat watching the glum festivities, looking for evidence that would indict the proprietors, he would be able to taste his drinks, and not have to watch for a chance to spill them under the table. Or so he planned it, and acted accordingly, on that Saturday night which he and his partner spent in the various joints in and around the Pennsylvania station; until one o'clock in the morning, when Abe said: "Well, sport, let's call it a day." Kip got up—and what was this?—the floor was unsteady, and the chairs got in his way as he tried to pass them. "Jees, kid," said the other, watching his footsteps, "you're woozy!"

"No, no," insisted Kip. "I'm—I'm all right." It was an unfortunate moment for him to choose for a hiccough.

Abe Shilling's fat cheeks and thick, substantial lips expanded into a broad grin. "Boy, you've got a load!" he exclaimed. "Here, take my arm!"

"No—don't need it." Why is it that a man can never bring himself to admit that he has fallen under the spell of John Barleycorn? Not even the most honest of young wowsers, who has done it in the service of his country!

"Come on," said Abe, "you need a bit of fresh air."

So they went out into the winter cold, which felt good to the face and to the lungs. In the sky a full moon was shining—or

rather two of them, for good measure; that bounty of nature, displayed on Saturday nights and early Sunday mornings, and celebrated in a song by the minstrels of Tin Pan Alley. Kip felt like a song now, something like: "We won't go home till morning, till daylight doth appear." At the same time he felt like crying—because he knew he oughtn't to be so happy, and he was a conscientious youth.

Abe, the man of experience, told him that what he needed was exercise, and walked him for a dozen blocks before he took him to the subway. "You reckon you know your station, sport?"

Kip insisted that he knew everything in the world. But Abe took the precaution to lead him down, and see that he got onto the express for Van Cortlandt Park, not that for the Bronx. The young wowser took a seat, and in five minutes was sound asleep, and rode far past his station, and then had to take another train coming back, and fell asleep again. So it was three o'clock before he got home, and Maggie May was sitting up waiting, beside herself with fear. She took one look at him, and then burst into tears. As Kip fell asleep in his bed, it was to the sound of a refrain which wove itself into the phantasmagoria of his dreams: "I won't have it! I won't have it! I won't have it!"

X

Kip slept until noon, and woke up with the strangest feelings he had ever experienced. His wife and mother and aunt were ready with hot coffee and soda-water and purgatives, all the old household remedies. All that day Maggie May watched and tended him, saying little, but never letting him out of her sight. He was troubled by a strange restlessness; he wanted something, he didn't know what—or perhaps he knew and would not admit it to himself. Anyhow, his wife took him for a long walk, in a world made beautiful by falling snow; she brought him home again, and fed him hot soup and things; later she took him to a picture-show, to divert his mind. Never once were the gentle brown eyes removed from him; and finally, late that evening, she shut him up in their room, and they had it out. "The lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine!"

So, on Monday morning, when Kip reported for duty, he asked for an interview with the deputy administrator in charge of his fate.

"Mr. Doleshal," said he, "I'm terribly sorry, but I'm afraid I'm not cut out for a 'buy man.' "

"Why not, Tarleton?"

"I just can't carry the liquor. I was drunk when I got home Saturday night."

"Well, of course, if you're not used to it; that might be the case with any fellow."

"The point is, sir, I can't afford to get used to it, because my father died a drunkard, and so did his father before him."

The official sat studying the serious young face with wrinkles of perplexity running across the forehead. "By God!" he said. "It makes a man sick, to be holding down such a job, and giving such orders!"

Kip was surprised by his vehemence. "You feel that way, Mr. Doleshal?"

"I feel so, that sometimes I think I'll quit the service. The futility of it—the callous stupidity of it! It seems to be the first rule of our law that common sense and decency don't apply! You know perfectly well when you see liquor being sold in a place—you know by the conversation you hear, the smells, a hundred signs. But no, you can't have a search warrant for the place, except by swearing that you have actually drunk some liquor! And when you've made yourself into a drunkard—what chance do we have to get honest service out of you?"

"I'm glad to hear you say that," said Kip. "Because it's all seemed pretty bad to me."

"It's so bad that it's a disgrace to the country. The whole service is a disgrace—you'd think it was designed by men who want to discredit the law, and bring it to nothing. It's so bad—well, I have to hold my tongue, that's all." Whereupon the retired football star checked himself, and said, in a quiet voice: "Of course, Tarleton, we can't ask you to go on drinking liquor under the circumstances. We'll put you at some other kind of work."

So that Monday Kip stayed in the office, and helped the clerk who handled for delivery to the chemists the array of bottles and jars and cans of "evidence" brought in by the various agents. Later on he was set to looking up titles to buildings which the government was planning to "padlock" because of their use for unlawful purposes; also the names and addresses of registered owners of cars which were forfeited for having been used in the transporting of liquor.

It was monotonous work; but Kip had exhausted all the possibilities of boredom in his years as a clerk in the Tarleton House. He was happy, because, when he entered his home, he no longer had his wife and mother and aunt watching him as if he were subject to fits of homicidal mania. He would still be satisfying his conscience, and gathering information to be used in lectures. As for Maggie May, she would be more of a wowser than ever; loathing with all her soul that obscene bird of prey which had swooped down out of the sky, and seized her carefully chosen husband in its talons, and lifted him off the ground, and been frightened away just in the nick of time!

CHAPTER SIXTEEN · · · *JAILBREAK*

I

ROGER CHILCOTE had written another play and was engaged in arguments about it with managers. The managers were interested in a thing which they called "box-office"; while Roger's conscience took an odd form of activity, compelling him to write the most depressing plays in America. Here was the same problem which Maggie May had pondered in connection with her father: was it Roger's pessimism which impelled him to drink, or was it the drink which explained the pessimism? Maggie May, the wowser, regarded drink as the prime mover of all the evils in the world; but Kip, remembering the midnight discussions between Roger and Jerry in the Tarleton House, thought it might be possible to keep Roger sober, if only a scientist would disprove the theory that the universe was running down like a clock. What was the use of anything, if, at the end of a million million years, there would be no critics to care whether a poet had written great dramas, or merely trash and sensation?

One sought in vain in the poet's past for the explanation of his plays; but gradually it dawned upon Maggie May that the place to look was in his future. Those grim and bitter dramas were prophecies! When you met the famous writer, the first thing you noted was his restlessness; his hands could not remain still, and he had a way of getting up and moving about the room for no apparent purpose. When you met his pastel blonde, you saw that her delicate colors were fading fast, and a network of lines was appearing in her face; she lighted one cigarette from another, and watched Roger with tragic yearning in her eyes. Yet they would quarrel, too; their irritation was not to be repressed, even in public, which to Maggie May, with her old-time traditions, was an unthinkable thing. "I wonder if there is some other woman between them," she said to her husband. But Kip didn't know, and couldn't guess. The two couples met rarely, for Roger and his lady moved in a

brilliant and fashionable world, associating only with celebrities or millionaires.

Kip ran into the poet on the street, and since it was lunch-time, they went into a restaurant together, and had one of those old-time chats which had been such a delight to the younger man. Never would the golden-haired poet lose his magic over Kip! Of course Roger knew that his brother-in-law had become a prohibition agent, and that seemed to him the funniest thing that had ever happened; he would look around uneasily in the restaurant, pretending to be afraid of being caught in disreputable company. He would ask how the cause was progressing, and when Kip answered seriously, he would say: "I was talking with a police lieutenant the other day, and he's a very ardent believer in the cause; he told me he had banked sixty thousand dollars last year, on a salary of twenty-nine hundred and fifty, I think it was." Presently he would add, gravely: "Jerry told me of a pretty good investment yesterday, Kip; if you'd like to put your savings in, we can promise you a hundred percent a month. It's an airplane concern to bring Canadian whisky over the border, and all of your superiors are in on it."

Yes, Roger was the same old rascal; but he was Kip's rascal, and the younger man's mind was torn in two, because he liked to be with him, yet it didn't seem quite right, it was treason to the cause, and to Kip's job. Suppose it should happen some day that Kip would have to raid a place where Roger was a guest! Or to uncover one of the bootleg rings, and discover that Roger had money in it! Yes, it might happen. Kip would listen to his wife scolding on the platform, demanding indictment of those who were financing the devil's traffic; he would think: "Suppose some day we should turn up evidence against Roger!"

II

However, that was not the discipline which fate was preparing for the darling of the Broadway sophisticates; it was another and far more impressive kind of lesson. At three or four o'clock one morning the Tarleton family was awakened by persistent ringing of the telephone, and Kip answered, and there was a voice, saying: "Don't use any names in answering this question, and don't say any more than yes or no. Do you recognize this voice that is speaking?"

It was like a scene from a movie melodrama, or perhaps in a nightmare, when you aren't sure whether you are awake or not.

All Kip could say was: "What's that?" The voice repeated the formula, slowly and carefully, and Kip said "Yes,"—for the voice was Jerry Tyler's.

Said the voice: "Once more, don't answer anything but yes or no. You have a relative who has golden hair and sometimes drinks too much—you know who that is?"

"Yes," said Kip.

"Do you know where that person is now?"

"No," said Kip.

"Well, if you find out where he is, do your best to keep him out of sight. Somebody is looking for him that ought not to find him. That's all I can say over the phone. It's urgent, so do the best you can."

"All right; but for heaven's sake"—

"Don't talk any more. Wires are often tapped. If you want to ask more, you know where I live. Good-bye."

So that was that. Kip told Maggie May, who was greatly alarmed, and insisted on going with him. They dressed and hurried to the subway, and in an hour or so were at the fashionable apartment house in the east fifties, where the editor and his wife now resided. They gave their names to the man at the desk, and the message was to come upstairs, where they found a group of Roger's cronies, men and women. There was Jerry, masterful and self-satisfied as ever, but looking badly worn; and his wife, slender and exotic, with lavender paint on her cheeks, and long jade earrings almost touching her shoulders. The clouds of tobacco-smoke in the air, and half-empty decanters of liquor, revealed that the party had been making a night of it.

Jerry waited until he had shut the door of the room behind Kip and Maggie May. Then he said: "Eileen Pinchon has killed herself."

"My God!" exclaimed Kip.

"How?" cried Maggie May.

"Shut herself up in a room with a gas-heater, and lay down on the floor and put the tube in her mouth."

"And where is Roger?"

"We don't know. He spent the night out somewhere."

There was a pause, while they tried to get this situation into their minds. Another woman, no doubt! "Are you afraid Roger will kill himself?" asked Maggie May.

"No," said Jerry. "We're trying to keep him away from the police."

"The police?"

"They have an idea somebody may have strangled Eileen, and put the tube in her mouth. It's rot, of course, but they smell a scandal, and insist they have to question him. We all think it's a shake-down."

"But Jerry," exclaimed Maggie May, "Roger ought to see them, and have it out."

"We think he's with another woman," explained Eleanor, "and that wouldn't look so good in the tabs."

Said Jerry: "The thing to do is to keep him out of reach till the trouble blows over. Everybody knows Eileen had good reason for taking herself out of the way; she was a dope fiend, and Roger ought to have quit her long ago."

That was the way Kip always got his news about Roger—after the event. There was another mystery explained! All those crises of nervousness, the quarrels, the incessant string of cigarettes, and the failure of the delicate blond charms. That was how the fates had chosen to punish a brilliant intellectual, who knew everything and everybody in the world worth knowing, and spent his time inventing witty sayings at the expense of antiquated moral standards! Already the newspapers were printed, and being distributed over the city, and in three or four hours more the town would be reading: "Poet's Mistress Suicide," or perhaps; "Free Love Companion Takes Gas Route!"

"What can we do?" asked Maggie May, in a voice that sounded far away and faint.

"We've been to the hotels where Roger might go. He'd sign another name, and we haven't been able to find him. What we're afraid of is, when the story is read, he'll be recognized, and some bell-boy or clerk will tip off the police. Of course, if he's in a private home, and gets the news, he'll have sense enough to keep out of sight."

"The police are watching Mrs. Pinchon's apartment?" queried Kip.

"Of course; but we thought we'd go up there at daylight, and keep a lookout for him. He'll be apt to come in a taxi, and maybe we can get to him first."

III

So there was a job for a female wowser, and for a prohibition agent with a grudge against the "cops"! Maggie May and Kip, with other members of the party, went down to the street, and entered a limousine which was waiting, and drove to the neighborhood on Riverside Drive. They posted themselves at the various approaches, and spent two or three hours peering into passing taxicabs and cars; but in vain—there was no sign of their golden-haired genius-god. They separated, Kip to his work, and Maggie May to their home—and when she opened the door and entered the apartment, there was the frightened face of Kip's mother, putting her fingers to her lips and whispering: "He's here!"

Maggie May never knew where Roger passed that night. All he told her was that he had got the news, and realized he needed to be with those who loved him. Not many persons knew he had a sister in New York, nor where that sister lived, so the police wouldn't be apt to come there. He had been drinking, and had never before let Maggie May see him in that state; but this was a real emergency, and she would have to stand by him. He was shut in her room, where the baby could not see him; pacing the floor, and looking like a man who has spent a couple of weeks under fire in the trenches. Maggie May would go in and labor to quiet him, and listen to the dreadful story of what he had been through with his blonde mistress—a story of horror, of a sort which had never entered the dreams of a female wowser. She had learned everything about the slavery of alcohol, but here was something new, the story of a "dope-fiend."

All that a sister's love could do for a man was done for the tormented poet. The arts she had learned with the father were practiced now upon the son—and all were needed. Maggie May would weep with him, and pray over him; she would watch and tend him, scold and exhort him, and stay by him all his waking hours, taking no chances of suicide. Presently the two were locked in a death-duel over the subject of more drink. Roger wanted to stay in this apartment and dodge the scandal, and the disgrace to the family, but he couldn't possibly stay without having a flask of whisky. "Maggie May, you don't know how it is, a man can't just stop all at once—it'll kill him, it'll drive him out of his senses.

I want to stop—before God, I mean to—but I can't do it all at once, I have to taper off."

Maggie May put her foot down; there would be no liquor in her home. She was a prohibition lecturer, and Kip was a government agent, and would not break the law, nor wink at its being broken—

"But, my dear, that is easy, I'll get a doctor. Any doctor in the world will prescribe liquor for me, in my condition."

"I won't have it, Roger! I'm ready to stick by you—I'll help you any way on earth that I can think of—but I won't have liquor in my house. If you're going to quit, there's only one way, and that is to do it. I saw the whole thing with Papa, and Kip saw it with his father. Oh, Roger, please, please quit!"

Then, of course, the last resort of tormented woman—tears! Maggie May sat down on the side of the bed, and burst into a paroxysm of weeping—such agonized weeping as a woman can do, when her deepest instincts of decency have been struck to death. What would the people at home say, when they read the story in the papers? What did her love for her brother mean, all the years they had played together, all the times she had tried to help him? He threw it all away—family pride and honor, it was all nothing to him—because of that accursed habit of liquor! She laid everything upon that, in her fanatic fashion. If Roger had not been a drinking-man, he would have found himself a decent wife, and not been living with half the fashionable sluts in the town. If he had not been drinking, he might have saved Eileen from her weakness—or possibly she would never have taken it up. There happened to be truth in that, and it would haunt Roger the rest of his life.

It was the days of the elder Roger all over again; and when Kip came back, at dinner-time, it was like the days of being the Big Chief Powhatan: coffee being made in the kitchen, and somebody running out for soda water, and purgatives, and seidlitz powders, and bromo-seltzer in little blue bottles, and whatever else could be suggested. And presently here came Jerry Tyler to greet his friend and help to cheer him; and would you believe it—here was the female wowser, holding Jerry up in the hallway, declaring that he should not take liquor in to her brother! When he said he had none, she would not believe him—she knew that he would bring it, and deny it, for what he thought was Roger's good! She proceeded grimly to "frisk" him; and sure enough, he had a hip-pocket flask, which she made him hand over until he was ready to quit the house!

IV

Kip applied to Mr. Doleshal for a day's leave of absence, in order that he might stay at home and help in that crisis. He became for the day a male nurse, companion, and guard; he listened to moans of grief, mutterings of despair, outbursts of impatience, even fury; he asked questions, stupid and intelligent; he heard discourses on theories of esthetics, types of free verse rhythms, the evolution of the expressionist drama—anything in the world to provide grist for the mill of Roger's mind, and keep it from grinding itself.

In the worst period of stress, Kip bethought himself of that incident which he had been sure he could never let Roger Chilcote get hold of. "Believe me, old man," he said, "I know how it is. I've been through it myself."

"Been through what?" demanded Roger.

"The craving for a drink."

"You have craved drink? What do you mean?"

Kip told how, all innocent of what it meant to be a "buy man," he had set out in the service of his country, and for a week had tasted of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Roger thought it was the funniest story that had ever come his way; he lay back in his chair and laughed till the tears started into his eyes. He made Kip tell every detail of the adventure, every single drink that he and Abe Shilling had bought during six week-days and one hour of Sunday morning; exactly how the drink had tasted, and what Kip had felt, and how he had been tempted afterwards; what Maggie May had said, and what Mrs. Tarleton had said, and Miss Dimmock!

The story did Roger a world of good; and oddly enough it increased Kip's influence and power for helping. No longer was he a plaster saint, a character out of a Sunday school book; he was an initiate, an insider, a man among men; he had smoked the ritual pipe, he had slept in the holy place, he had been butted by the goat. He could say: "Yes, old man, I know, it's hell; but I fought it down, and you can do it too!" Roger could cling to his hand and say: "Stick by me, kid, and I'll win out!" Then, since his sense of humor was stronger than any other, he would begin to chuckle. "You old guzzler! You old booze-hound! Which did you prefer, English or Scotch?"

V

The newspaper stories were terrible, of course. They gave the life story of the divorced wife of Ellis T. Pinchon, well-known manufacturer of ball-bearings and machine-tools. They told where she had met the playwright, Roger Chilcote, and about the development of their love affair. They described the apartment in which the pair had lived for the past two years; they went into details, such as Roger's green silk pajamas hanging over the foot of the bed, and the page of manuscript he had left on his writing table. They described the body lying on the bath-room floor, clad in a scarlet kimono of flowered silk. Evidently the reporters had been turned loose to ransack the place, and help themselves to whatever they considered of public interest. They printed pictures of Roger and Eileen, taken from the walls of the apartment; the "Evening Star" put under Roger's likeness: "POLICE TO QUIZ POET ON DEATH."

But the police did not carry out this threat. Jerry Tyler got busy, in ways known to young men of Manhattan. A first class lawyer went to see the police officials, and ask what they meant by casting shadows upon an honored name. What scrap of basis for suspicion did they have? Were there any signs of violence on the body? Wasn't it true that the woman's limbs were peppered all over with needle-pricks, proving that she was a morphine addict? Wasn't this fact known to all her friends? Would anybody say that Roger had ever been known to strike her, or mistreat her in any way? The fact was, he had broken with her, and had not been near the apartment for two or three days. He had spent the night with another woman—but naturally was not anxious to make use of that alibi, nor to furnish such an item of gossip to the press.

Jerry phoned to Richard Fessenden. As Roger was a cousin of the banker's wife, and had been a guest upon his estate for a long period, there was danger that the Fessendens might be mentioned in connection with the story. So that powerful influence came into action; another lawyer called upon the superintendent of police and the chief of detectives—with the result that the scandal died quickly. The body of the unhappy Eileen was shipped back to her parents, who lived in Ottumwa, Iowa; and the newspapers forgot their interest in the whereabouts of the poet. After three or four days he began taking walks—with his sister holding on to his arm, and staying right by him.

Roger was a cowed man. It would take him a long time to get

away from the memory of that experience. His old defiance was gone, and in its place was a curious kind of defiance in humility. Roger would look the world in the eye, and say: "Yes, I'm on the wagon. I found I couldn't stand it. It got my father, and it was getting me, so I had to quit." He would not change his ideas; he would continue to be a defender of "personal liberty," and to sing the praises of the "booze arts," and to make devilish jokes about wowsers and bluenoses. But that was all right with Maggie May; so long as he didn't drink, he might say what he pleased—until the baby was old enough to understand him!

Roger was going to live under his sister's wing; the only way she could keep him safe from the temptations of this wicked city. The program was agreeable to Kip, and to the old ladies; in spite of all the poet's failings, they still looked upon him with the awe they had felt, the first time he crossed the threshold of the family hotel. There was no better company in the world than Roger Chilcote; nobody knew so much, or could tell it so entertainingly. If they could have a share in saving him from his own weakness—well, that is the sort of task for which the Lord has made wowsers.

The brother and sister set out together, to find an apartment which was near Central Park, for the baby, and within reach of the theatre district, for a busy man-about-town. The place which Roger picked out was frightfully expensive, according to the ideas of the Tarletons; but Roger was going to pay the rent, in return for his board, and the saving of his soul. The new home had a study, bed-room and bath for him, and a separate room for each other member of the family. Roger had his own furniture, and the work of house-hunting and getting settled was an adventure, a new start in life for a master of the tragic muse, grim and bitter, with ashes in his heart.

VI

So for a long time Roger Chilcote lived the ascetic life. Of course he couldn't break entirely with his cronies; they would invite him to their affairs, and do their best to keep everything on the old basis. But when the drinks were brought in, he would begin to get restless, and presently he would make an excuse, he had some writing to do; he would take his departure, in spite of protests, and the cronies would shake their heads, in between drinks, and say: "Too bad! Too bad! Poor Rodge!"

He would come home, and bury himself in his books, of which a stack of new ones were piled on his study table. His fierce, impatient mind would dash through them, and see how they ought to have been written, and how the writers contradicted themselves on this page and that. He would start to write something of his own, and would keep himself shut in for hours, brooding and fretting; what was it—did the muse desert a man entirely when he took a seat on the water-wagon? Roger would rehearse in memory the melancholy stories of those poets who had foresworn Bacchus, and never thereafter written anything worth reading. Poor Swinburne—he had been on the way to a drunkard's grave, when Watts-Dunton had rescued him, and taken him home and watched over him for thirty years or so, and the springs of his ecstasy had dried up, and he had become a fussy little English gentleman who talked republican talk to shock the bourgeois. But let not Roger mention such an item in literary history to Maggie May! Her eyes would flash, and she would declare, she wouldn't exchange the whole of Swinburne's alcoholic ravings for one day of her brother's happiness.

Another curious item of literary history: the unhappy poet, the cast-off darling of the Broadway sophisticates, found a new friend and admirer in Roger Chilcote Tarleton, aged nearly three. Day after day, when the muse refused to heed the summons, the poet would go out into the park with this brown-eyed and brown-haired darling, as round and soft and lively as a collie puppy; they would romp, and roll a ball, and when the youngster was tired, they would sit on a bench in the spring sunshine and discuss the nature and meaning of the universe. Roger was fascinated by the spectacle of this little mind unfolding; all the quaint aspects which things took when you beheld them for the first time—the queer blunders you made, trying to assimilate things which appeared to be alike, but were different. The poet of pessimism became a companion of grandmothers and great aunts, and, in all innocence, of nursemaids. What would the critics say if some day the tragic muse were to appear before the world in the costume of Pierrot, or Punch and Judy, or Sinbad the Sailor, or Captain Kidd?

Maggie May was busy with her career as lecturer, and Kip at his job of mopping up an ocean with a sponge; so they had to leave to chance the shaping of a poet's destiny. As happens so often in human affairs, the end was one beyond the flight of the wildest fancy. One Sunday morning the telephone rang, and Kip

answered, and it was Jerry Tyler, wanting to know, "Where is Rodge?"

"Haven't seen him yet," said Kip. "I think he's asleep."

"There's something in the morning paper that will interest him. Tell him that Francis Frothingham Tydinge is dead."

"Wait till I get a pencil," said Kip.

But Jerry laughed. "You don't need to write the name," he said. "It's Mr. Blank."

"Mr. Blank?" echoed Kip, his own mind blank for a moment.

"Have you forgotten?" said Jerry. "The husband of Anita!"

There came a burst of light in the mind of a serious and conscientious young reformer. "Oh! Then Anita is a widow!"

"Oh, master intelligence!" exclaimed the editor of the "Gothamite." "Yes, Anita is a widow, and Ambrose Bierce has recorded his opinion that a widow is God's kindest gift to man."

"Roger will be able to see her!" said Kip, still groping to make this strange development real to himself.

"Tell him for me, Kip, there are millions and millions in her lap. If he has his wits about him, he'll go over there this morning, and be the first able-bodied male on the scene."

Jerry hung up, and Kip got the paper, and on the page where the deaths of important persons were recorded, he found a half column about Francis Frothingham Tydinge, senior partner in the Wall Street firm of Tydinge and Essex, who had dropped dead in his office of apoplexy at the age of seventy-two. The deceased had left a widow, Mrs. Lucile Asbury Tydinge, and two children, Francis Frothingham, junior, aged ten, and Lucile Frothingham, aged nine. The article gave the family history of the dead man, an old and well-known New Yorker; a list of the companies of which he was a director, the clubs to which he belonged—all the customary details. To Kip, as he read, the words seemed to have a life of their own; what a singular thing, to read an obituary notice, and know more about the man than he himself had known! The master and keeper of the Golden Jail was no more; the bars of that jail had vanished—the bronze had melted into air—and Roger Chilcote, and perhaps also his brother-in-law, could enter, and inspect the deepest dungeons, and sit down and have tea in them!

VII

Kip waited until Roger called for his coffee; then he took him the paper, saying: "Jerry called up and told me to show you this."

He laid it in Roger's lap, and went out, leaving the poet to the privacy of his own thoughts. Kip did not deliver Jerry's ribald message; but apparently that was unnecessary—Roger was able to do his own thinking. When he emerged, he was dressed in the fashion of young men who take ladies to church, and afterwards to stroll on Fifth Avenue. He did not stop for explanations, but went downstairs and stepped into a taxicab, giving an address in the east sixties. Arriving at the house, he rang the doorbell, which had black crepe tied over it, and said to the elderly butler that he had called to present his condolences to Mrs. Tydinge. When the butler said that Mrs. Tydinge was not able to see any one, Roger replied, with that casual air which impresses butlers: "Take her my card. I am an old friend, and she will see me."

The man took Roger's hat and gloves and cane, and ushered him into the reception-room—Ferrara marbles, and Gobelin tapestries, and all that sort of thing, the real stuff, smuggled out of Europe. The poet sat and gazed about; he had never been there, of course—never anywhere but in the top-story room with its darkness and smell of paints. He decided that the proper place for most of the stuff was in a museum; placed here, in a jumble, it was "Kitsch," and what you would expect of a stock-broker.

"Anita" came, pale, but lovely, a trifle heavier, after ten years; a splendid woman, a dark brunette beauty, eager, intelligent—and long desired. She stretched out her hand to him: "Roger, I am so glad!" He stood, holding her hand, long enough to give the servant time to get out of hearing; then he took her in his arms.

"Oh, Roger!" she whispered. "We must wait until he is buried!"

"We didn't wait until he was buried before." The blood sang in the poet's veins; it sang a song of triumph, a wild barbaric chant, which came to him line by line, as he went his way through this singular experience:

Mine enemy is dead;
I enter his house....

To the woman he whispered words of passion that once had been fire and ecstasy to her; those lines which had thrilled all the Island of Manhattan—those cries of rapture, of defiance, which had made audiences stand up and shout their delight. The words had lost none of their magical power; youth and glory had come back to the world. He kissed her upon her lips, her cheeks, her eyes, her

throat; she was in his arms, in a half swoon—and then she would whisper, in a voice faint with horror: "Roger, his dead body is waiting!"

"Where is his dead body?"

"At the undertaker's."

"The king is dead, long live the king!"

He went on, singing his song to her. Presently he asked: "Did you see that play, Anita?" He would call her that always, his own name, not the other man's.

"I saw it; and I read it a dozen times."

"You recognized it, then?"

"It was mine! I put the world outside!"

"Put it outside now, Anita!"

She clung to him—even as she tried to evade his kisses. "Roger, I am terrified! I can't believe it is true!"

"I am making it real to you—the man to the woman!"

"But dear—some one might see us!"

"Who is there to give us orders? Has he any relatives?"

"He has two brothers—"

"Are they here?"

"They live in the West. They are coming."

"Who is in the house?"

"Cousin Emily is here."

"That woman who used to watch you?"

"Yes."

"Tell her to pack up."

"Wait, Roger—just a few days!"

"Who else is in the house?"

"The servants."

"They are ours—not his." Again the cry of the conqueror:

Mine enemy is dead;
I enter his house;
I sit upon his throne;
I hold his wife. . . .

"Anita," said Roger, "where are our children?"

"Upstairs."

"I want to see them."

"Roger! You won't say anything to them!"

"I want to see my children."

They walked, holding each other's hands, to the elevator in the

rear of the entrance hall. This elevator was made of bronze, very elaborate, in the shape of ivy-sprays woven in and out; it had been made from a special design, a photograph of real leaves. Behind this impenetrable shelter stood Roger and his lady, borne magically aloft—ground floor, drawing-room floor, bedroom floor, nursery floor. All that time she was in his arms—

I hold his wife;
Her lips are mine. . . .

"Roger," she whispered, "you have loved other women."

"I always thought of you."

"You have been in a scandal. I read about it."

"I have forgotten it."

"Roger, how could you bear to leave me?"

"If I had stayed, he would have caught us, and he would have taken the children from you. Now we have everything. Enjoy it!"

VIII

Anita opened a door, and before them was a room, wide and spacious, with broad windows and decorations in bright colors. There were two children, sitting upon a rug; the first thing Roger noticed was their golden hair, and he thought: "How did she get away with it?"

The children stood up, and he saw they were little masterpieces. Eleven years of a woman's life had gone into them; they had been her present and her future. The offspring of the well-to-do have science applied to them; some one understands their diet, exercise, sleep, recreation, training; they have rosy cheeks, sound bodies, smiling faces, eager minds. There is purpose in everything they do, or that is done for them. Only when they mature, and have to choose their own purposes, the waste and failure begin.

"This is Mr. Chilcote," said Anita; "an old friend. This is Frank; and this is Lucile; and this is Miss Marcy." The children made their pretty curtseys, and the governess her bow. Roger looked from one to another, searchingly; he knew that this was a part of the enemy's castle which had yet to be taken. Two eager young souls, and a middle-aged, repressed one, a bundle of romantic dreams hidden behind a mask of propriety.

"Mr. Chilcote is a writer," said the mother.

"I tell stories," said Roger. "Does anybody like stories?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Frank. A miracle of nature, to see your own face, twenty-two years younger! To see in a pair of brown eyes the eagerness that used to be in your own soul! To see a face lighted by your hopes, unscarred by your blunders! Your flesh and blood, even though he carries another man's name!

"And you, Lucile?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Chilcote." What magic was this? He had made a creature with Anita's loveliness, but with his bright hair! The regularity of her features, but with his fire, his ardor, his outpouring of words. "Oh, yes, Mr. Chilcote, I like every kind of stories!"

"You must call me Roger," he said. "I am big, and I look like a grown-up, but inside I am young like you. A fairy bewitched me when I was a baby."

"Oh, tell us about it!"

"Sit down," he said; and seated himself, not in the pompous chair, but on the rug, as became one bewitched by a fairy. "I will tell you the story of the Ogre who built the Golden Jail."

"Oh, Roger!" exclaimed Anita.

"Such a lovely story—especially for children. Would you like to hear it?"

"Oh, yes! Oh, yes—Roger." They said it shyly, for it is hard to trust what grown-ups say; they do not respect the imagination, the most important of all the faculties.

"Once upon a time," said Roger, "there was a terrible old Ogre, and he lived on gold. I mean, he ate gold."

"Did it agree with him?" demanded Lucile.

"Not so very well; I am told he was somewhat lean, and always hungry for more. He kept the gold in great piles about him. He built a great house of gold, with golden bars at all the doors and windows, so that the neighbors called it a Golden Jail. And he kept there a lovely princess. She was very young, and she had married him—because, you see, she did not know that he was an Ogre; he had a magic system, by which he could change himself to look like a King. It was in his gold that the magic lay; he would throw it at people."

"What did that do?"

"It bewitched them, so that they obeyed him. He had pieces of gold made, of a certain size, very round and pretty——"

"Like money!" cried the little voices.

"Yes, just like money. He had them made small, and some large, and he threw them at people—every so often, sometimes at

the end of the week, and sometimes at the end of the month; whoever was hit by that money was bewitched, and became the slave of the Ogre, and did whatever he wanted done. He bewitched them all so that they kept the Golden Jail for the Ogre, and would not let the lovely princess out."

"Did she get out?"

"You see, there was a prince. He was a fairly good-looking prince, and had golden hair, that was a little bit wavy, and sometimes got out of place——"

"Like yours!"

"Is mine out of place?"

"It is very nice," said Lucile, politely.

"Well, this prince found out about the Ogre's magic——"

"And did he get the gold?"

"The prince did not need the gold. He had a magic that was greater than gold. He would go through the world singing songs, and wherever the sound came, the people were happy. He would wave his hand at the children, and their hair would turn to gold. He came to your house and waved his hand many times, and you can see the results. Did anybody ever tell you about it?"

No, nobody had told them. "But you tell us!" they exclaimed in chorus. "How did he get in?"

"He came by way of the roof."

"Like Santa Claus?"

"No, not by the chimney. There is a door in the roof."

"Oh, yes, but it is locked. We are not allowed to use it!"

"Somebody opened it for the prince, and he came in, with his magic which makes golden hair."

"But what happened to the Ogre?"

"The magic of the prince was more powerful, and the Ogre faded away. That is what happens to all Ogres, if you wait for the end of the story. The prince waved his hand, and the bars of the Golden Jail melted away, they vanished into air, so that nobody knew they were there any more; the prince walked into the Golden Jail, and married the lovely princess, and they had two lovely children, both of whom had golden hair. So they lived happy ever after."

"I think that is a fairly nice story," said Frank, judicially; "but it is too short."

"Tell us another!" cried Lucile.

"I never tell but one story at a time; it would spoil my magic. But I tell them often."

"How often?"

"Well, sometimes as often as three a day, after meals. They are good for digestion."

"When will you tell us another?"

"Very soon, if you say so."

"Oh, please! Please!"

"Would you like me to come every day and tell them?"

"Oh, yes! We would love it!"

"Well, but it's rather far from where I live—all the way across the park."

"Mother will send a car for you—won't you, mother? Please!"

"Perhaps I might come and stay here, so that you could hear all my stories. Would you like that?"

"Oh, that would be lovely! May he come, mother?"

"What do you say, mother?" demanded Roger, gravely. "Do you care to employ me? My stories are highly recommended for children. Also they are good for governesses"— here Roger cast a smile at the bundle of romance masked by propriety. "My stories are educational. Governesses take them and think over them, and become wise."

"Oh, Miss Marcy, will you listen to his stories? May he tell us stories?" To that chorus the poet took his departure; and when they were out in the hall, with the door closed, Anita caught his hand, and whispered: "Roger, you are a devil! You told that woman everything!"

"Why not?" said he. "Are you afraid he will come back to life?"

His children are mine;
Their hair is golden. . . .

IX

They re-entered the elevator made of metal ivy-leaves. It was Roger who pressed the button, and Anita said: "Not that one. That is 'up.'"

"We are going up," said Roger, quietly.

The elevator stopped at the fifth floor, the top, and they went out, and stood in silence. Roger was a poet, and would savor emotion to the full; that strange emotion which comes upon return-

ing, after long years, to places where one has lived intensely. The emotions of the blind, who are suddenly endowed with sight! For Roger had never seen a ray of light upon this spot. Now he examined the steep stairway by which Anita had led him from the roof; the passage along which he had glided, with her trembling hand for guidance; the door she had opened with slow caution, suppressing the faintest click.

He led her to the door, and opened it. He saw the furnishings of a luxurious studio; and also he discovered the explanation of the smell of paint—an easel, and a number of paintings, hanging, or standing against the wall. The room was lighted from a skylight. He looked further, and saw an object that gave him a start: an Hawaiian surfboard, with nails in it!

"Where did you get that?"

"A servant found it on the roof—long afterwards. It has been weatherbeaten, you see."

"We shall have it polished, and set up in the living-room, Anita. It will be a totem."

He entered the room, and stood looking at the paintings. They were landscapes and flowers, crude from the point of view of technique, but with a groping for beauty in them. "A substitute for love," commented the poet. When she assented, he added: "Now, you will have love." He went to the door, and closed it, and turned the key in the lock.

"Oh Roger! He is hardly dead!"

"Believe in no superstition. Believe in life. Believe in love."

"There are some who call you decadent, Roger. Have the dead no rights?"

He laughed. "Only the rights they have earned. Cold-bloodedly he bought you with his gold; you who were young and innocent of what the purchase meant. Have you forgotten what we used to say about *our* rights?"

He took her in his arms and gazed into her eyes. "Wake up, beloved!" He shook her lightly. "That ugly dream is over! You and I are here—and life is ours."

His ghost walks;
He howls unheard;
I laugh aloud. . . .

"For the rest of our lives, Anita! Nobody matters but us! From this moment, I think of you, you think of me! Let the

others go—to the land of ghosts! Does it make you happy for me to kiss you?" He began to experiment, not waiting for her answer. "To kiss your lips? Your eyes? Your throat? Are you glad I came, Anita?"

X

Roger crossed Central Park, walking on what seemed no ordinary pavement, but one made of rubber, which lifted his footsteps. He had had his way; he, the imperious one, who liked having his way, and meant to have it forever.

Maggie May was in her room, working over some notes for a lecture. "You are late, Roger; we had dinner."

"I have dined on nectar and ambrosia," he announced. "I have been flying on a magic carpet, inspecting the treasure-caves of Aladdin. To be exact, I have broken into a jail, and have rescued a fairy princess."

She looked at him intently. You never could tell with Roger. Had he broken his vows, or was this just some of his words? "What is it, brother?"

He took a chair and brought it close to her, and sat down and began: "Sister, for a long time you have been begging me to find a wife."

"Oh, Roger!"

"Do you still feel that way?"

"Of course—if it is the right woman."

"Well, she is a lovely woman, and very good, and as it happens, she is rich. I hope my ascetic sister and brother-in-law will not hold that against her."

"Who is she, Roger?"

"She is a widow. Her husband dropped dead yesterday, after keeping us waiting a long time."

"Oh, Roger!"

"She is a year or two younger than I, but she has two children, a boy of ten and a girl of nine."

There came a look of dismay upon Maggie May's face. "Roger! Step-children are such a responsibility!"

"As it happens," said he, "they will not be step-children; they are *my* children."

She stared at him, too much surprised to be embarrassed by this avowal. Finally she managed to whisper: "You have two children, Roger?"

"Maggie May, you remember reading 'The Golden Jail' in manuscript—a long time ago. Did it never occur to you that it might be a true story?"

"You mean, Roger——"

"I see; it did occur to you!"

"I heard that people were joking about it. Somebody sent me a clipping, from some wretched paper."

"Well, as it happened, the paper was right. I have two of the loveliest children you ever saw. I have been spending part of my Sunday with them."

"Roger, you take my breath away!" She was struggling hard not to be a prude—or to seem one to her brother.

"Shall I tell you about it? When I first came to New York, I met a young woman. She had been married to an old man when she was eighteen. She didn't love him; she had no children, and she wanted children. I gave them to her."

"And now the husband is dead?"

"I read the news in the paper, so I went over to see her, and to see what my children looked like."

"You had never seen them, Roger?" There came a note of pity in her voice.

"Never. But I might have known them; they both have golden hair."

"Oh! What a strange story!"

"Does it shock you too much?"

"I don't know what to think; I never heard of such a thing."

Roger, who had expected a scolding, decided that his sister was a jewel! "You won't mind if I marry her?" he inquired, with a touch of mischief.

"Why, no, if the children are yours, I suppose you ought to. Have you—I mean, does she still feel the same towards you?"

"Well, I haven't asked her in so many words——"

"Of course, you couldn't do that, with her husband not yet under the ground!"

Roger laughed. "I think she will be obliging. You know, sister, the world is changing, and people are learning to be more frank about what they want, and not so shy in taking it. Don't you think that ten years was long enough to wait?"

"Roger," said Maggie May, "I hope you have found the right woman, and that you will both be happy. I want to meet her as soon as you think proper."

"That will be as soon as you can get dressed," he replied. "She is, of course, very anxious for you to come and make her feel respectable."

Maggie May, who had learned her duties when it came to the whims of erratic men, went quickly to make herself ready.

XI

Roger took Maggie May in a taxicab, and they alighted in front of the "Golden Jail." A strange moment for a sister! It is strain enough when a brother goes out into the world and picks himself a bride, and brings her home. The bad judgment of men is notorious—also their lack of consideration where sisters are concerned. But when a man goes out and brings home a bride, and at the same time two half-grown children—that is really too much all at once! As if the clock of time should take a jump, and carry one ten years into the future!

They rang the bell, and did not have to send up their cards; for butlers learn quickly—and are surprised at nothing. "I will tell Mrs. Tydinge," said the old man, respectfully; and Maggie May went in among the Ferraras and the Gobelins, and gazed about wonderingly. "It won't be a bad house at all when it's fixed up," said Roger, apologetically. But Maggie May was not thinking of the house. She was thinking of life and its moral problems. She was shocked to the depths of her puritan soul; and yet, the voice of her reason kept asking: why? If this woman who had loved her brother loved him still, and wanted to marry him—what did the past matter? Maggie May, the conscientious one, would have required time to think out the many aspects of such a problem; but there was no time, she had to act upon her impulses—and there were so many of these!

A rustle of clothing, and Anita was in the doorway. Maggie May stood up, and they took a look at each other—both of them frightened. Maggie May could not bear to see such a look of fear in the eyes of a woman who must have suffered. Above all things, Roger's sister must not appear self-righteous to Roger's wife! "Anita!" she said—and then, hesitatingly: "Roger says I am to call you that."

"Yes, Maggie May, if you will." Anita's voice trembled, and then stopped.

Maggie May held out her hand. "My dear, you are lovely," she exclaimed.

"You are going to be nice to me!" said Anita. "You are not going to be shocked!"

"How could any one help being nice to you, Anita?"

"Oh, I know you were shocked!" persisted the other. "But you come to see me!" she added, humbly.

Maggie May, following her impulses, was becoming less shocked. She realized that this woman was not the bold and shameless creature she had dreaded. She took her future sister-in-law's hand and led her to a couch, where they sat side by side. "We both love Roger," she said. "And we shall both have to take care of him."

"I'll try to make him happy," said Anita, with a note of rapture in her voice. There stood the male creature, listening, and preening himself upon his achievement—he, the invincible one, the master of magic!

"I can see right away," said Maggie May, "you're going to spoil him. We shall have to unite against him, and have no nonsense!"

They were women, and knew how to talk. They had a man between them, and would put him in his place. And the man would stand smiling, knowing perfectly well that he was the center of creation, the indispensable one, the bearer of the seed. He would have love and rapture when he called for it—to say nothing of a house that had cost three hundred thousand dollars, and furnishings as much again; a staff of servants to do his bidding, and two children to mirror and perpetuate his glory. Yes, things like that have happened to poets in New York; they are numbered among the chances which make a thrilling gamble of the literary life!

"I was frightened to meet you!" exclaimed Anita. "Roger tells me that you give lectures, and I can't imagine it. I wasn't even allowed to go to lectures, for fear I might hear something wrong."

"You shall come to my lecture tomorrow night," said Maggie May. "Roger shall bring you—that is a way I punish him, making him bring people to my lectures."

Then suddenly she remembered. "Oh! I want to see the children!"

The three of them entered the ivy-leaf elevator. "I'm not a bit frightened for the children," said Anita. "You can't find anything wrong with them."

"I am so excited I can hardly breathe," declared the other; and in this she was stating literally the truth.

She stood in the doorway of the playroom, and gazed at those two golden creatures, and her heart beat so that it hurt. It just couldn't be that such things happened in the world: you were presented with ten years of youth and joy and beauty and goodness, all in a moment, the snapping of a finger—just like that! Maggie May caught her breath, again, and then again.

"This is Roger's sister, Mrs. Tarleton," said the mother.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Tarleton," said two tiny voices in a well-trained chorus.

"And so this is Frank!" said Maggie May, searching the little features for evidence of what she could only half believe. "And this is Lucile!"

"Yes, Mrs. Tarleton," said each in turn.

"You must call her Aunt Maggie May," said Roger the incorrigible. It amused him all the more, because the governess was drinking in every word.

"Yes, Aunt Maggie May," said Lucile, obediently.

"Are you really our aunt?" demanded Frank.

"She really is," vowed Roger.

"And you are our uncle?"

"I am a magic man. A poet is uncle and cousin and father and grandchild to the whole world."

"Are you going to tell us that new story?"

"I always keep promises."

"Will you tell us about the Ogre again—the one that ate gold?"

"And that built the Golden Jail?"

"And that gave the children the golden hair?"—all this in a chorus—strophe and antistrophe.

"Does Aunt Maggie May tell stories?" persisted Frank.

"Yes, many stories," replied Roger. "She tells wowser stories."

"Wowser stories? What are they?"

"Stories about what you mustn't do, and what will happen to you if you do it."

"What mustn't we do?"

"Oh, so many things, it is hard to keep track of them all."

"Aunt Maggie May, will you tell us a story about what we mustn't do?"

"It is only bad people who need such stories," said Maggie May. "I am sure you only do what you should—isn't that so?" She looked at the governess—who declined to commit herself irrevocably.

"I will tell you about my little boy," said Maggie May.

"Oh, have you a little boy?"

"Yes, darling," said the new aunt. "A little boy just like you, only younger."

The barriers were down now. These were Mama's grandchildren, exactly the same as "Baby Rodge." These were "Baby Rodge's" own little cousins, the blood in their veins was Chilcote blood; Anita, their mother, was indeed Maggie May's sister, and in the South where Maggie May Chilcote had been born and taught her ethics, there was a maxim about family loyalty: "Together we stand, divided we fall."

Maggie May sat down, and they gathered at her knee, and heard about "Baby Rodge," and how he went out and fed the squirrels in the park, and one of them sat on his shoulder and cracked nuts, and the baby asked, did the squirrel's mother part his tail in the middle. Such anecdotes are standard currency in all nurseries, and these little people were glad to have such nice company, on this Sunday when things were strange, and not entirely explained. They had been told that their father had gone away on a journey, and would not be back for a long time; they had seen their mother in unusual states of excitement, hugging them, first one and then the other, with tears running down her cheeks—but happy tears, she kept insisting, the happiest tears you could think of. Something was going on in the grown-up world!

XII

The three representatives of the grown-up world went down to Anita's living-room, where the two women sat and probed each other's souls. "Tell me," said the sister, "has Roger told you about himself?"

"A little, now and then."

"But not everything?"

"How can I tell, Maggie May?"

"There is one thing you have to know. I wouldn't let Roger marry any woman in the world without telling her. He knows I will do it—and I prefer to do it in his presence."

"Go ahead and get it over with!" said the brother, grimly.

It was on an impulse that Maggie May had accepted Anita as her sister; and now, on another impulse, she would win her for an ally

in the struggle to save Roger. She leaned forward, gazing earnestly into the woman's beautiful dark eyes.

"He is four years older than I, Anita, and all my early life I thought he was a sort of divinity. He has many of the great virtues—and only one great weakness, which may not be his fault entirely. Has he told you that he is a drunkard's son?"

"You will hear the details in full at the lecture tomorrow night," said Roger.

"You will hear them now," persisted Maggie May. "Roger hates what I do, and everything I say about liquor—but he has to stand it, because he has learned that my will is stronger than his in this matter. Your one chance of happiness is to make him as much afraid of you as he is of me. I'm putting the weapons into your hands—and it will be up to you to use them."

Maggie May told the story of her girlhood—with intimate details not revealed on lecture platforms. She told about Roger's wild youth, and his career in New York. She did not mention the women—that was another story; but she told about the drinking-bouts, and of the final struggle she had waged and won. "If he's here now, appearing as a man you can welcome, it's because his sister took a stand, and exercised a woman's privilege to have hysterics."

No worse ordeal for a man, than to listen to a recital of his humiliations and blunders—especially to the one woman who is supposed to look upon him as a hero of romance! Roger sat with one knee crossed over the other, and a foot in the air, and the quick, nervous beating of the foot betrayed the strain he was under. When she mentioned the vomiting, "For God's sake, Maggie May," he exclaimed, "spare us a few details!"

"I hope to spare Anita everything," replied the sister. "It is better to see all of it in imagination, than any part of it in reality. Go out, if you can't stand it."

Roger sighed, "Go ahead—but cut it short."

"You see how it stands between us, Anita. I love him, and he never doubts that I love him, and would do anything to help him—anything but seeing him drink liquor. He knows that I am a fanatic on that subject; I can't be silenced, or bluffed—he might as well butt his head against a stone wall. And that is the way you have to be; that is the way every woman must be, before we can put an end to the filthy business of social drinking."

"You see, my dear," said Roger, "my sister doesn't go out into

society, and has no idea of the number of husbands in New York who vainly endeavor to keep their wives from getting tight."

"The women wanted freedom," said Maggie May; "they wanted to be the equals of men, and it's too bad if they can't find any better use for their opportunity than to adopt the men's vices."

"Yes, it's too bad," said Roger. "But it happens to be the case." His tone was that of intense irritation; but this only stirred his sister to greater fervor. She would drive this lesson home to Roger's future guardian; here, now, and forever, she would win her sister-in-law to the cause!

"I hope you will not be one of the fools, Anita. Do you use liquor?"

"Only now and then, for politeness."

"Well, be rude from now on. Have you friends who will drop you if they can't get liquor in your home?"

"If they do, I will give them up for Roger."

"You are in the position of Eve in the Garden of Eden. You have everything in the world to make you happy—provided you can get along without one thing."

"Apparently the man in the garden of Eden has nothing to say about his life," broke in the man.

But Eve's sister paid no attention to Adam's brother. "You have a hard task, my dear," she continued, "to live with Roger and his set in New York without liquor. Can you face it?"

"I can; and I will." Anita's tone was final. She had been an easy convert.

"If you marry Roger," said Maggie May, "you take over the responsibility; I can't come into your home and conduct it for you. You have to take a stand—not a feeble pretence, but making it an issue of life or death. There is to be no poison in your home, and none of Roger's friends is to bring it in. You must make him understand that if he drinks, you'll be more unhappy than he can endure to see."

"Show her how, sister," said the mocker.

"Every woman knows how," replied the sister. "It's the way they run the world. But not all of them have the courage, or the knowledge. I hope Anita will come to my lectures, and learn about prohibition, not only for you, but for your children. They are at the age where I first began to notice something wrong with my father; when I think of the anguish I suffered—I am ready to start another lecture tour."

"Spare yourself, Maggie May," said the poet. "I'll settle the matter according to your wishes. Anita dear, I'll take you as my substitute for John Barleycorn." Roger arose to go. His sister was a jewel, but she was also a bore!

"Tell me," said Maggie May, the implacable, "have you a cellar in this house?"

"Yes," said Anita. "My husband was something of a connoisseur in wines."

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Roger. "I spoke too soon! Pre-Volstead stuff?"

"Some of it has been there since his father's day, I am told."

"Anita, you break my heart! Ring the bell, and let me see the list."

But no amount of mockery could divert Maggie May from her purpose. "You ought to get rid of that stuff, Anita."

"Can it be sold?"

"It is beyond price!" cried Roger. "A hundred dollars a bottle wouldn't pay for it!"

"You can't sell it legally," explained the wowser. "But you can get a government permit and send it to some hospital."

"Of course, it's perfectly all right for the sick to drink poison," said Roger, with heavy sarcasm.

"I leave the sick to the doctors," countered Maggie May. "But I needed no doctor to tell me about my father, and I need none to tell me about my brother."

"If my friends find out about that hospital, they will all fall sick. I am feeling faint already!"

"Roger can console himself, Anita. He will write poetry about it. He knows everything that all the poets of the world have written about his favorite 'booze arts.' "

Said Roger: "I will tell you the saying of a philosopher, Diogenes Laertius, who was asked what wine he liked to drink, and replied: 'That which belongs to another.' "

Said Maggie May: "You will learn about my brother—the more outrageous a joke is, the more thrill it gives him."

Said the outrageous one:

You know, my friends, with what a brave Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my House;
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

"Learn, as I have," commented the sister. "Let him say whatever he wishes. Your only concern is with his actions. If you see him lifting the wine-cup to his lips, knock it from his hand!"

"My God!" exclaimed Roger. "Why don't you say: 'The lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine?' "

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN · *UNDERWORLD*

I

THE oratorical career of Maggie May Tarleton opened itself like a flower. Every time she gave a lecture, some one asked her to repeat it in a new place, and thus she made friends and gathered supporters. It was interesting to discover how many groups of people in and around New York cared earnestly about the dry cause. On the Island of Manhattan there was not a single newspaper which failed to jeer at prohibition; most of the influential magazines also were mortgaged to the wets; yet, underneath the surface of publicity, there were millions of people who practiced the old-fashioned virtue of sobriety, and had no love for the debauchery amid which they had to live.

Maggie May's acquaintance with the Jews ripened into friendship. She saw the inside of several of the uptown synagogues—and apparently they all had money, and expected to pay a gentile woman for helping to educate their children. Also there developed intimacy with Dr. Craven; he had her speak in his church, and told other people about her, and brought new engagements. Now and then he would invite her to lunch, and talk things over, and lend her books to read; he helped to open her mind, and revise the equipment of ideas she had brought from Louisiana.

What was a Unitarian, and why was he an alarming person to know? This benevolent and silvery-haired saint put before Maggie May the idea of a moral code based upon the observed facts of life, instead of upon ancient texts and theological dogmas. Why, for example, should modern people consider themselves under obligation to preserve the Jewish Sabbath, which intelligent Jews had learned to forget? Why should readers of modern books, familiar with the discoveries of psychology, take their ideas of right and wrong from fragments of ancient Hebrew history, parts of which happened to have literary merit, while other parts were obscure, cruel, or obscene? Why should believers in prohibition weaken their cause by tying it up in the public mind with Bible-worship and the observance of the "Lord's Day?"

No, said Dr. Craven, the fight against the use of beverage alcohol, and the outlawing of the traffic, should be placed upon rational grounds; they were problems of social hygiene, based on the effect of alcohol upon the human system, and the corruption wrought by its commercial exploitation. The prohibition of narcotic drinks stood on the same basis as the prohibition of narcotic drugs, or the promiscuous sale of any other poisons; they could be justified equally as well to an atheist or a Communist, a Baptist or a Seventh Day Adventist.

One of the temperance organizations made Maggie May a proposition, to make lecture dates on the basis of a percentage of the fees; and that brought her a string of new engagements. She would pack up her little straw suitcase, and meet Kip after his working hours, and they would travel to a suburban town, where Maggie May would give her talk in a church or hall; many persons would come up to shake hands with her, and ask for her address so that they could write to her. She and Kip would spend the night in the home of some friend of the cause, and early next morning he would return to his job, while she might stay for the day, meeting new groups of people, and forming new centers of activity, a league of parents, or a committee to see to teaching in the schools.

One of the mistakes of the prohibitionists, as Maggie May saw it, had been in imagining that when they got their idea written into the fundamental law, their victory was won, and they could sit back and leave it to the government. But no government ever did anything, except as public sentiment forced it; nor could a change in the habits of millions of people be made in a year or two. The prohibition movement had been made by education and agitation, continued for a century; it might well take another century before the job was completed. People had to be roused and convinced, time after time; fires had to be built under the politicians, and kept blazing. Most important of all, there were the children; a new group coming upon the scene each year, and having to be taught and protected against the drink evil. There was no escaping that duty, unless you gave up human life as hopeless, and society as not worth saving.

II

It was a help to such a propagandist to have a husband in the front-line trenches, to bring her the latest news of the battle; what the enemy was doing, and how and why the campaign was being

lost. Kip was now on the inside of events, and in position to get information. A man of his character and energy was not kept indefinitely upon clerical work and the checking up of legal records. His superiors discovered that he would carry out orders, and was proof against the "easy money mobs" which swarmed in and about the office; so they took to using him for confidential work. Mr. Doleshal would send for him, and put a problem before him: here was a report from the chemical laboratory, on a five gallon can of alcohol which had been seized in a raid upon a "cleaning plant"; at least it was supposed to be alcohol, but the chemist said "aqua pura," or plain ordinary water from the Croton dam. Thus a legal case which the government had prepared at great expense, had been "blown up" by some crook, and a bunch of rascals would have to be turned loose unpunished.

On this can was a label, with the initials of the agent who had checked it in at the warehouse; there were the wax seals he had put on it, with the impression of his shield in the wax. The question was, had this agent sold out, or was somebody in the warehouse working a "racket?" "We want to put you to work with this man," said Kip's superior, "and see what you can find out about him. We're not trying to make a case against him; God knows we have enough prosecuting to do already! But if he's gone wrong, we can't have him on our payroll,"

"I'll see what I can do," said Kip. "I'll have to try to look a little crooked myself." He said this with a smile—he who had once been naive. "Don't be surprised if you begin hearing things about me."

With this agent, a dapper young chap by the name of Asher, Kip was sent out on the job of checking drugstore purchases and sales. Every such store was permitted to sell liquor on physicians' prescriptions, not more than a pint at a time. Each drugstore had a permit to buy from the bonded warehouses, and to have liquor delivered to it. Every now and then Federal agents would appear, to check the quantity ordered against the quantity on hand and the prescriptions on file. With the thousands of drugstores in "Federal District Two," it couldn't be done adequately; it was merely a question of dropping into places at random, and finding a crook, or an honest man whose books were carelessly kept. Needless to say, one wasn't always welcome, and was frequently taken for a grafter.

On the first day, while working in a drugstore, Kip happened to put his hand into the side pocket of his coat, and discovered a

twenty-dollar bill. Of course he knew he would find something wrong in that establishment; and he did. Most of the physicians' prescriptions were signed in the same handwriting, even though the names were different. (There was a lively trade in blanks that bore the names of imaginary physicians.) But Kip said nothing, and gave the drugstore his "O.K."; and when they went outside and were walking down the street, he said to his partner: "They tell me our jobs are going to be put under civil service rules."

"Yeah," said the other, "so I hear."

"That means a lot of us guys stand to lose out, I guess."

"I suppose so."

"You going to try the exams?"

"Yeah, I been boning up in night school."

"What do they ask you?"

"Oh, a lot of hooey. Who signed the Declaration of Independence, and how many members of the Board of Aldermen in the City of New York, and what are the powers of county supervisors, and who carved George Washington's false teeth."

"Well," said Kip, "I saved up half my salary."

"You're a lucky guy," said the other. "Me, I need more than that. I got a wife."

"I'm kidding you," said Kip. "Between you and me, I think the government has its nerve to pay men what we get, and expect 'em to live on it."

"What you driving at, kid?"

"Well, I got to find out what you expect. I don't know if you got anything from that guy back there, or if I am supposed to split with you."

"He didn't say anything to me."

"No, nor to me; and I can't be sure—it might be that my wife put that money in my pocket before I left home."

"How much did you find?"

"Twenty dollars; and I suppose I got to turn it in to the office."

Kip said this with a grin; and the other responded: "I always turn in everything I get." Kip said that was good, and said no more for that day.

III

There were many drugstores which were "speakeasies" in the rear, or even at the soda-fountains; you knew the "soda-jerker," and gave him a wink, and paid him fifty cents for your drink of

"sarsaparilla" or "coke," instead of the customary five. On their second day Kip and Asher ran into such a place, and found more liquor than the records of purchases showed, and the permits didn't cover half the sales, and some of the records were doctored—everything wrong. "Now, see here, gentlemen," said the druggist, "what's the use of making trouble for a man that's doing the best he knows how? I left these records to my brother, and he's been sick, and if they're wrong, it isn't my fault. I can straighten them out if I have time to consult my brother."

"Yeah," said Kip, the hard-boiled one; "but you see, we gotta turn in somebody to the office, because otherwise they'll think we're a bunch of four-flushers, and we ain't earnin' our salary."

"Well, for God's sake, turn in somebody else but me. I got troubles enough with the landlord, who's trying to raise the rent on me, when I can't make expenses, with that chain drugstore on the corner across the way. Be reasonable, now——"

But no, Kip was implacable; he and his partner had to consider their jobs, with the very fine salaries involved. The two of them collected the evidence, and stowed it into a hand-bag they carried for the purpose; they went out, and when they were around the corner, Kip said: "Look here, that guy is scared out of his wits. He thinks he's in real trouble."

"He knows mighty darn well he is," said Asher.

"Well, he strikes me as being not such a bad sort. Why don't you go back and see him for a moment? You and I may neither of us pass those civil service exams, and what's going to happen to us?"

So the other fellow went back, taking the handbag, and presently he rejoined Kip, and gave him fifty dollars, which he said was Kip's half. It wasn't such a bad business, with twenty dollars the first day, and fifty the second. In the course of the afternoon they managed to find an elderly druggist who had sold two more pint flasks of liquor than he could show prescriptions for; they would "turn him in" to save their reputations. Then Kip recollected the place where he had been sick, the first day of his career as a "buy man"; they went over there and examined the records, and sure enough, the place was still doing business in the old way. Kip said they had better not be too greedy, but keep their records good, so they would "turn in" that place also. Asher agreed, but said that half the other guys in the office were "getting theirs,"

and hastening to get all they could before this fool civil service arrangement came into effect.

Next morning Kip saw Mr. Doleshal, and told him what had happened, and gave him the seventy dollars. Asher was relieved of his shield and his pocket commission, and Kip never saw him again, nor did he hear any more about the matter—except that a couple of days later his superior shoved a letter over the desk to him, saying, "You'll be interested to read that." It was written on a piece of plain paper torn off a pad, and said:

"To the prohibition director: This is to advise you that you have a couple of crooks on your force, names Tarleton and Asher. I can't afford to sign this, but they held me up for two hundred dollars, and just after I paid a hundred to the cops. I am going on the water-wagon, and my records will be O.K. next time. Crime don't pay! A Druggist."

Kip smiled and said: "That guy Asher held out fifty dollars on me! I'm glad I got him!"

IV

Six months after Kip entered the service, there was a new administrator appointed for Federal District Two; an army officer by the name of Major Mills. Perhaps it was his West Point training which gave him the idea that laws ought to be obeyed; anyhow, he set out to enforce prohibition against offenders big and little, and his stormy career in office lasted a year and a half. The story of what happened to him, and to the service during this period, would have made a day-by-day education for the people of New York—if there had been any newspaper in the city willing to publish it.

Mr. Doleshal had referred to the office as a "mad-house"; and if Kip had any doubt about his meaning, he would have understood when the new administrator set out to abolish the graft of "sacramental wine." The law permitted clergymen to purchase wines for ritual use, and this included the Jews, who were supposed to drink wine at home on festival occasions. It was port, sherry, muscatel and angelica, with alcoholic content as high as fourteen percent, so it was highly valuable for bootleg purposes. The regulations had generously permitted the setting up of "congregational wine-shops," at which the disciples of Judaism might supply their needs; under this arrangement there had grown up a wine-trade

amounting to three hundred thousand gallons a month. Also there was a big mail-order wine business, and a young lady in the office with Kip, on the same meager salary as himself, was sporting a high-powered motor-car, plus all the diamonds she could carry.

There were six hundred rabbis in on the graft, and on the day when the wine-store franchises were abolished, the entire six hundred came rushing to the office. Five hundred and ninety-eight had long black whiskers, while the other two had black faces without whiskers—they were Harlem Negroes converted to Judaism by the Volstead act. All the six hundred wanted to talk at once to anybody in the office who would listen, regardless of whether the person understood Yiddish or not. Some of them had paid as much as a thousand dollars for the franchise, and had collected money from customers, who now looked to them to make good.

Kip was set to investigating the lists of these customers, and the problem was a simple one; all you had to do was to look up one name in the telephone book, and then you would find the other names consecutively. A list would start with a good Jewish name, Rabinowitz or Daimondstein, and then it would be Rawlins or Davis, and presently it would be Patrick Regan or Michael Dooley. It turned out that the young lady of the high-powered motor-car and jewelry had been collecting ten cents per name for making out customer-lists for rabbis.

The howls in the New York offices were so loud that they became audible in Washington. Even from far-off California came cries that reached the sensitive presidential ears! California was shipping thirty million gallons of wine per year—and all that business was going to be ruined by a fool army officer who thought that laws meant what they said! Cries from the vinegar men who had been getting wine for their purposes—and who for some strange reason required ten gallons of wine for every gallon of vinegar they made. It was hard to see how any one could make money on that basis; yet they were getting rich—and some of them had helped to pay for the election of politicians!

V

Also there was the brewery business, far from being like Caesar's wife. All breweries were free to operate, with the understanding that the beer was to have its alcoholic content reduced to less than one-half of one percent, after which it might be sold as the much

despised "near beer." The extracted alcohol was treated under government supervision, by a process called "denaturing"; it was mixed with certain chemicals which were supposed to make it unfit for drinking, after which it might be sold for industrial purposes.

This meant that the breweries had to be watched continually; and it had to be done by experts, men who understood brewing and the chemistry thereof. With these experts, as with every other arm of the service, there was five per cent of the number required—and so there was five per cent enforcement of the prohibition of real beer. Prior to the new law, brewing had been done in big places; but now there was springing up a host of little places—all, of course, for the purpose of breaking the law. Many of the places were built and arranged especially to this end. A brewery would be set up in back of a garage on another street; there would be a tunnel from the rear of the brewery into the rear of the garage, so that barrels of beer and alcohol could be rolled into the garage, and shipped out from there. All over the city were hiding places known as "beer-drops," at which trucks would leave such barrels until the time when they were called for by speakeasies, night-clubs, "cutting-plants," and other branches of this "alky racket."

A keg of real beer cost one dollar to produce, while its price at the time was twenty-six dollars; so one could see how huge were the stakes. The public was offering an enormous subsidy for crime, the greatest ever known in history; and needless to say, the public was getting what it paid for. There were estimated to be twenty thousand "beer parlors" in New York, more than twice as many as of the old saloons. Most of these places sold near beer which had been "needled"—that is, had had alcohol restored to it. This was alcohol which had been "denatured" by the government, and then redistilled, or "cleaned," by the bootleggers, in an effort to extract the poisons. But this effort was never entirely successful—which explained the item generally found in chemists' reports upon bootleg liquor: "traces of phenolphthalalate." It was this condition which roused the especial fury of the wet press of New York: the government was poisoning the public!

However that might be, here was a life-time job for the husband of a female wowser: to wander about the neighborhood of "wildcat" breweries, and collect items of information as to how they were operating, and what quantities of stuff they were sending out at night, and how and where. It was dangerous work, for the beer-runners had agents of their own, and a stranger hanging about the

neighborhood became the object of immediate solicitude, and if he did not give an account of himself, he was apt to get a tap over the head while passing some dark alley. He might disguise himself as a book agent or peddler, but that wouldn't do him much good, because the gangsters knew all about book agents and peddlers, and had some of their own. On one occasion, when Kip and another "Fed" made an attempt to hire a vacant room across the street from a brewery, they discovered that agents of the brewery had hired every room which commanded a view of their place, and kept all these rooms vacant—taking the precaution to send every night, to make certain that no landlady had double-crossed them and rented the room twice!

Then, too, there were the Tammany police to outwit. Kip and his pal would set out on a dark night and find a place of concealment, say in an areaway, to watch the trucks coming out from a brewery yard. They would flatter themselves they had slipped in unobserved; but a few minutes later would come a "flatfoot," patrolling his beat, and he would peer into the areaway and say: "Hey, you guys, what you doin' there?" Club in hand, he would haul them forth; and then, of course, they would have to show their shields. "Feds, hey?" he would say, in a tone of contempt which all decent men feel for "snoopers." He would stoop and rap the pavement sharply with his stick—a sound which would travel for blocks in the still night air. To the police it was "rapping for assistance," while to beer-runners and lookouts it meant "Danger!"

VII

The inability of the New York police force to distinguish between agents of the government and common criminals was a source of frequent loss to the government, and of saving to the bootleggers. Only a short time after this beer incident, Kip was witness of a still more striking case, which filled the service with enduring bitterness. There were certain high-priced cabarets and night clubs in the pleasure district which ran in open defiance of the law, and claimed so much influence that they could not be touched. Their existence became a criterion of an administrator's good faith, and Major Mills laid plans to take up their challenge.

Said Mr. Doleshal, one afternoon: "Please report for duty this evening at eleven-thirty, Tarleton. You can make up for your

lost sleep tomorrow. Wear some old clothes, and needless to say, don't mention this to any one."

"All right, sir," said Kip; and was on hand as directed, and saw that there were preparations for a raid. Half a dozen of the most trusted agents were on hand, and revolvers and sawed-off shot-guns were issued, with all the customary instructions; an agent was not permitted to use firearms unless he was attacked with a deadly weapon—and this specifically did not include bottles or clubs, which had to be fought with fists, or with chairs, or other bottles or clubs if one could find them. "Remember," said the agent in charge, "you are the aggressors in the newspapers."

They went downstairs, one or two at a time, to the Central Garage, where the government cars were parked. Before they started, they knew that some one in the office had sold them out; there were two police cars waiting, one facing east and the other west, so that there could be no chance to escape from them. The police car stayed right behind the government car, all the way across Forty-second Street to the theatre district. The high-priced cabarets were paying hundreds, some of them thousands, every week for "protection"; and this was what they paid for.

The government car began to slow up and draw into the curb in front of "Cowboy Mollie's" place; and forthwith the police car opened up its siren, letting out a scream that could be heard all over the district, a square mile. The "cops" barged up alongside the government car, and leaped out, making a rush to block off the agents. "Here, what's this?" shouted the police lieutenant in charge. "Hold up your hands!"

"Hold up hell!" said the government leader, in a fury. "We're Federal agents, making a raid."

"Whadya mean, raid? What yer tryin' to give us?"—all this time, of course, blocking the way into the cabaret, and the siren going so that a man had to yell to be heard!

"You know perfectly well we're Federal men——"

"You Federal men? Let's have a look at your shields."

So then, business of looking at shields—and the siren still screaming. "Shut off that damned thing!" roared the agent; but for some reason the police lieutenant found difficulty in making the driver of the car understand that the noise was no longer required.

"Prohibition agents, hey?" said the lieutenant. "Well, I'm sorry. You looked like a bunch of yeggs to us."

"Didn't you see the red lights on our car? Didn't you see our U. S. plates—all the time you were following us across town?"

"Very sorry, all a mistake, of course. Too bad—you ought to notify the captain when you're planning a raid."

"Yes, and have him notify every cabaret in town! Get out of the way there!"

The agents rushed inside—but too late, of course. The employees of these places had regular "fire-drills," so as to be ready in case of alarm. The liquor was all kept in cases, so that it could be rushed out by the back way. Whatever was loose was dumped down the drains, and that which was on the tables was poured onto the floor, or down the gullets of the guests. There would be a wild scurrying, and a powerful odor of alcohol in the air, but not a drop that could be collected for evidence. Also, the proprietor and the manager would be gone, and there would be nobody to arrest but some waiters, whose fines would not amount to the profits of the place for one night. If you arrested any of the guests, like as not you would find they were fashionable society ladies and business men of the town, persons who had influence enough in Washington to have anybody kicked out of his job. It was safer to let the guests alone!

VIII

Next morning, open your newspaper and read what fun the wits had out of that farce-comedy! A government which interfered with people's rights, and set out to change their personal habits at the behest of a bunch of wowsers and bluenoses—that government had got what it deserved, which was to be made ridiculous. The police blunder was unfortunate, of course—but what could you expect when Federal employees rigged themselves up as gangsters, and set out to behave like gangsters? Those writers who affected a lighter tone made whoopee with "Cowboy Mollie," a lively young female who was the darling of the intellectual underworld; a girl from Oklahoma who invented picturesque pranks for the entertainment of the Tenderloin, and had been nabbed by the government half a dozen times—but always managing to outwit her persecutors.

In the old days, not so far back but that Kip could remember them, the keeper of a brothel had been known as a "madame," and her women were known to the police as "disorderly characters," and to the customers as plain "whores." But now big business

had taken charge, and everything was refined, and placed upon a cultured plane. The madames had become "hostesses," while the women were "dancing partners," "entertainers," "artistes"; in lighter moods, after the synthetic stuff had begun to flow, they were "jazz-babies" or "red-hot mammas." An arrest, which had once been a disgrace, now made you into a "headliner." Because of the golden flood which poured in every night, and every morning till daylight did appear, you could afford to hire, not merely police cars for your protection, but a publicity man to handle your affairs, and a portrait painter to immortalize you in oils, and a novelist to make you into a best-seller. You would become the boon companion of bankers and newspaper publishers; you would talk over the radio, and see your face upon the front pages of the papers, and know yourself the toast of the town.

Prosperity had come back to America. That economic wave which alternately recedes and rises again—it was coming in now with such a rush that the country went crazy. Prices rose beyond the dreams of speculators' avarice; men made millions, tens of millions in a day's operations. The little fellows who read the financial pages and the "dope-sheets" are nearly all "bulls," and this was their market. The result was that every night a mob poured into the pleasure district, its pockets stuffed with cash, eager to spend it for anything that would bring reaction from the strain of the day. Price was no obstacle—rather it was an object, the means by which they demonstrated their victory, and "told the world" how "pretty" they were sitting.

They came like a herd of swine to the trough, ready to gobble every kind of pleasure that swine could appreciate. They wanted delicious and costly foods, prepared in fantastic styles, with fancy French names; they wanted the rarest and most precious drinks—or, if these were not obtainable, they would take synthetic liquors served in bottles with ancient and honorable labels, printed last week in an alley under the piers of the Brooklyn Bridge. Solemnly the waiter would bear in a bucket full of genuine cracked ice, and solemnly he would lift out a genuine bottle wrapped in a genuine cotton napkin; he would exhibit the label—"Moet et Chandon, 1897," or "Mumm's Extra Dry, 1889"; he would produce a genuine corkscrew, and pull a genuine cork made from Andalusian oak-bark; there would be a genuine popping, and a rush of genuine foam, and into genuine champagne glasses, made in Trenton, New Jersey, would be poured apple cider with bubbles of carbonic acid

gas forced into it by machinery, and fortified with recooked alcohol having the familiar "traces of phenolphthalalate." For this the waiter would bring you a genuine bill for twenty-five dollars per bottle; and if in the course of the party your friends expressed appreciation of the superior quality of your vintage, the waiter would slip you the card of a man who had a stock of this "pre-war stuff," and would deliver it to your home for only two hundred dollars a case.

Also, of course, the swine wanted the females of their kind. If they had not brought a supply, they had only to tell the waiter, specifying the number, nationality, and color desired. The women were like the champagne bottles, in that the labels were attractive, if a little too bright, while the contents were poison. It was their job to keep customers spending, and to hold as much as the customers; if, in the small hours of the morning, the gentlemen wanted them to disrobe and dance on the table, there were high artistic sanctions for this performance—it was Salome, doing the "dance of the seven veils." The music was made especially for these "whoopee hours"—music from a Negro band, with thumping of tomtoms and rattle of drums, wails and shrieks that sent shivers up and down your spine, rhythms that suggested a man dancing with his knees out of joint. The genial old German formula, "Wein, Weib, und Gesang" had been translated and modernized into "Gin, janes, and jazz."

In short, the "underworld," after a long struggle for survival in America, had come out on top, and was now the world of glory and success. Its music had been taken up by radio and phonograph, and made the standard entertainment of the civilized world. Its fashions, reproduced in "movies," became the test of modernity, and the flapper in Oshkosh and Kalamazoo, to say nothing of Buenos Aires and Singapore, painted her lips scarlet and her cheeks violet or lavender, and wiggled her hips and stuck out her little fat settee as she walked. Its speech was reproduced in "talkies," and became standard English in the playgrounds of all the high-schools of five continents. It had conquered the world of culture and art; there were underworld poets, novelists, dramatists, to make mankind familiar with the technique of organized crime and violence, with every form of abnormal vice, and a vocabulary of profanity and obscenity, hitherto reserved for the lumberjack's brothel and the sailor's dive.

There was a school of drama now flourishing on Broadway,

which presented the concentrated essence of the sewage of the world. Nothing like it had ever been known in the English tongue; and after a year or two it was taken up by the "talkies"—which had an elder of the Presbyterian church for their moral guide. Under this pious guidance the gangster picture became a standard product, delivered like Uneeda Biscuits and Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to every cross-roads hamlet in the land; the killer stalked across the scene, pale of features and clipped of speech, grim, efficient, deadly—and took, in the hearts of the children of America, the place formerly occupied by Elsie Dinsmore and Little Lord Fauntleroy, George Washington and Paul Revere.

IX

Maggie May, confronting facts such as these, would have periods of depression, and wonder if human nature could be redeemed, or, indeed, if it were worth redeeming. She would pour out her heart to Dr. Craven, who sought to impress upon her his comforting notion that it had nothing to do with human nature, but was the automatic product of a social system. He would invite her to examine those forms of wholesale depravity which troubled her; in every case she would find big business behind it, seeking to grow bigger, and creating the frailties and follies upon which it throve. "These are the days of mass production, Mrs. Tarleton, and we have mass production of vanity, sensuality, and greed. We manufacture these products exactly as a distiller makes alcohol in his mash. And church people, who try to change human nature by praying and preaching, might just as well sit by the vat, and pray for it to turn out—say hot bread and doughnuts instead of whisky."

That sounded like strange doctrine from a clergyman; but this old gentleman who looked like a Giotto portrait explained his idea, that God had his laws, and gave us brains with which to discover them. If you wanted love and fellowship in the world, then put the world's business on that basis, and not on the basis of competition and exploitation.

"Surely, Mrs. Tarleton, you must realize that the liquor traffic is a business enterprise. You see manufacturers and wholesalers, and behind them financiers and banking interests; you see advertisers and promoters, working day and night to spread it. They call it 'breaking down sales resistance,' and it applies to vices as to everything else. Consider the 'wet' propaganda—who pays for it

and keeps it going? A group of big business men, some of the most powerful in the country—and all thinking about their profits."

"Aren't they making more out of bootlegging, Dr. Craven?"

"Don't let anyone tell you that, Mrs. Tarleton. The big business man finds the illegal traffic far less profitable than the legal. His operating costs are higher, and too much of the profit goes to the retailer and the 'squeeze.' The big liquor men want their business back, safe and respectable, as it used to be, controlling the governments of our cities and most of our states. Learn to look for the profits, my friend; they explain the ideas."

Maggie May found this way of looking at life interesting, even if disturbing. "What explains the newspapers?" she asked

"The advertisers explain everything about the newspapers. Every merchant who has goods to sell wants a wide open town, because that brings customers. Every wholesaler wants liquor handy, because if he can get the visiting buyer 'lit up' and sociable, he can sell him twice as big a bill. Every hotelkeeper wants conventions—the Elks and the Moose and the Shriners, the American Legion and the political parties, which have to be drunken riots, or what are they? So you have a huge mass of liquor sentiment; and editors are cynical, inured to depravity—and besides, they have to get 'tanked up' themselves, or how could they endure to turn out such a mass of crime and scandal?"

"You notice," said Maggie May, "the wets have taken to calling themselves Crusaders and Prohibition Reformers—all our names."

"When you become a Socialist," said Dr. Craven with his never-failing smile, "you'll expect all that. When the Catholic Church wanted to fight the Socialists, they set up 'Christian Socialist' unions. Now the Fascists have taken it up, and in Germany they are 'National Socialists!' You see, it is impossible to deny the ideal of social justice, of a world without exploitation and class dominance. It is equally impossible to defend liquor, so the wets are out for 'temperance.' The curious thing is, how many of them are wet in one brain-lobe and dry in the other. Rich men like the powder-barons of Delaware put up millions to finance the wet cause, figuring that taxes on liquor will replace their income taxes; but they don't think liquor is good for the powder business, so they enforce rigid dry laws inside their barony. You will hear railroad presidents making wet speeches at banquets, thinking of the traffic in beer that is going to their rivals, the trucking corpora-

tions; but if one of those gentlemen has an engineer who takes a drink before he starts on a run, that man never starts again."

X

All these ideas were highly disturbing to Maggie May. She would take them home and talk them over with Kip, and be fortified by his conservatism. Both husband and wife clung to the outfit of political opinions which they had inherited along with the color of their hair and the shape of their heads. The American political system was the most wonderful in the world; all that was needed was to find honest men to run it, and then everything would be well. Along with this political conviction went a set of moral ideas, which Maggie May had acquired from her mother, with the help of masters and pastors; precepts derived from the old-time religion, which had been good enough for her fathers, and was good enough for her. Socialism and Communism, free love and companionate marriage, divorce and birth control, all such notions were lumped together in her mind, and all were equally evil and alarming.

But this state of complacency was broken in upon by an unexpected and inconvenient event: Maggie May had another baby! At first she wouldn't admit how serious a problem this was. They made room for the "little stranger," calling him "Kip, junior," and were proud and happy; so were old Mrs. Tarleton, and Aunt Sue, and old Mrs. Chilcote, and all the relatives in Louisiana. But naturally Maggie May was set to thinking: how many times was this going to occur? Was a female wowser to have babies right along—and if so, what was to become of the lecture schedule? Also, how were the precious darlings to be kept in a New York apartment, and how was the money to be earned? Down in Louisiana babies came every year or two, and were called the will of the Lord; that was the creed of our mothers—and was it good enough for Maggie May?

She would have preferred to keep this as a strictly private problem. But unfortunately, the only person she could think of who might be able to advise her was Dr. Craven. She had heard him speak about birth control, quite openly and casually, and this had shocked and displeased her. But now, in her need, she sent her husband to the clergyman, to ask where they could get information. He gave Kip the name of a physician who was a Socialist, and would give the information—even though it was against the law to do so. Would Maggie May be willing to have the laws of

New York State broken on her behalf? Maggie May thought it over, and came to a momentous decision—she would! And when a female wowser has once started breaking the law for her own convenience, where is she going to stop?

The elderly clergyman was, in his urbane way, just as much of a wowser as Maggie May, and he refused to permit this problem to remain as her strictly private one. The next time they met, he spoke about it, and forced her to face the facts. As a man of conscience to a woman of conscience he asked, was it fair for her to use her privileged position—her opportunity of knowing a modern-minded man—for her private and personal benefit, and deny that same chance to women of the poor, who had to earn their livings in factories and stores, and could afford even less than she the luxury of having babies according to the "will of the Lord?" No, manifestly, that wasn't fair. Maggie May, who was now using contraceptives, and heartily glad to have them, had to confess that she had been in that particular matter both ignorant and narrow.

And when such a gap has been made in the armor of a woman's complacency, who can tell where the process will stop? For example, the question of divorce. The old-time religion looked upon divorce as one of the signs of social decay. But Dr. Craven asked: what was Maggie May going to teach her followers about the rights of a woman with a drunken husband? Was it her duty to go on living with a drunken man, under such laws as prevailed in the pious Catholic State of New York? Laws which permitted a man to violate his wife—there could be no such thing as a charge of rape inside the marital status! And then, if you were going to allow divorce for drunkenness, where would you stop? Would you follow the example of Russia, and make divorce as easy and cheap as marriage? No, surely not! exclaimed Maggie May—and was perplexed when Dr. Craven told her that Soviet Russia, which had had such laws for many years, had a lower divorce rate than the United States!

XI

Kip managed to pass his civil service examinations, and received a salary raise amounting to eleven dollars and sixty cents a month. Having been wise enough to choose a wife who earned her own money, he could live on his pay, and "turn in" to his superiors the sums which were paid by law-violators to induce him to look the

other way. Since he loved his wife, he could resist the charming "dames" who followed him about and endeavored to place their charms at his disposal. Since he had a mother and an aunt at home, preparing old-fashioned Southern meals with hot bread and other delicacies, he was not tempted by the lobster-palaces of Broadway, which were so eager to place their lobsters at his disposal. Go into these places at any hour, and you would find police officers and detectives, with now and then a "Federal," dining off the fat of the land; they would be overwhelmed with attentions, and it would be impossible for any of them to pay the bill, or even to see it.

Since the post of trust in war-time is the post of danger, Major Mills took Kip from other jobs and put him on special service in the "alcohol squad." Ninety percent of the liquor which made its appearance in bootleg channels came from the so-called "diversion racket," and the effort to stop this involved peril both to body and soul. It was here that the gunmen lurked, and did their quickest shooting; also, it was here that the "pay-off" men carried the fattest wads, and distributed them most freely. Since Kip had entered the service, the head of this "alcohol squad" had been exposed as a crook and dismissed.

Ethyl alcohol was a necessity in the manufacture of a long list of articles of commerce, and this alcohol was produced in distilleries, by the same processes as whisky. Following its lawful channels, the product was worth about one dollar a gallon; diverted into bootleg channels, it was worth fifteen times that sum; such was the stake in the battle. Amounting as it did to millions of dollars every week, this stake had raised up an army of tricksters, working day and night to devise new schemes to cheat the law. The servants of the law were outnumbered a hundred to one, and here, as in all military campaigns, Providence was on the side of the heaviest battalions.

The government had sixty-one chemical formulas for rendering alcohol undrinkable; the particular chemicals depending upon the industrial purpose for which the alcohol was intended. In the old days, before prohibition, this "denaturing" had been done in the plant where the distilling was done—which obviously was the economical and sensible way. But prohibition administrators who had no sympathy with the law, and no desire to enforce it, had permitted the alcohol to be taken away to so-called "independent plants," where the work was done, or pretended to be done. This was the

biggest source of graft, and of millions of gallons of bootleg liquor; yet each of these hundreds of plants was now a vested interest, sacred under the American law, and whenever you tried to revoke the permit of one, no matter how crooked, you had a long and costly legal battle on your hands.

The government had to count the barrels of alcohol at the distillery, and count them again upon arrival at the denaturing plant, and make sure there had been no substitutions. It had to make sure the denaturing substances were correct in quality and quantity, and that they were actually poured into the alcohol. It had to follow the barrels to the manufacturers who were to use the alcohol, and make sure they were real manufacturers, and not just simply blinds for the "alky racket." There had sprung up a host of so-called "cover-houses"—concerns which had dummy offices and staffs. You would go to one of these places to inspect their bills of sale, and they had none—only a wad of money in the safe, which they would "slip" to you alone in the back office.

Kip helped to investigate the "Continental Distributing Company," and the "Essential Oils Marketing Corporation," which had purchased vast quantities of denatured alcohol, supposed to be used in the manufacture of eau de quinine, lilac water, Florida water, foaming hair-tonic, and so on. One of these concerns had a letterhead showing an enormous plant, but it was located in an obscure shed, and had one aged mixing-machine, covered with cobwebs and dust. There were no records, no files, no customers, not even a warehouse; the alcohol was never taken out of the trucks which brought it from the denaturing plant, but the trucks were re-routed to the "cleaning plant" of bootleggers.

Kip investigated the business of the Eureka Alcohol Company—and that was a funny story. Among the receipts they showed him for their products was one from a large manufacturer of hair-brushes; the receipt was duly signed by the receiving clerk of the concern, and everything was fine, except for one fact—that the government had seized those particular barrels of alcohol on the way to the concern! The barrels were then safely reposing at the army base in Brooklyn, where you might see two floors, ninety thousand square feet of space, packed solid with seized liquor, waiting for the courts to decide its fate.

Also, Kip spent more than a month cultivating the acquaintance of the Santangelo brothers, Italian manufacturers of hair-tonics; such a nice, pious name they had, and they were all devout Cath-

olics, going to mass every Sunday. But on week-days, they sold alcohol to a gang which "cleaned" it, and "cut it twelve ways" in a filthy cellar dive, and then mixed it with juniper water, and labeled it "Gordon Gin," and sold it to the Park Avenue millionaire trade. It was Kip's job to go back and count barrels and check receipts, time and again, until each of the Holy Angels, as he called them, had taken him off in turn and paid him cash. In the end he had the satisfaction of seeing a patrol-wagon drive up and load the saintly seven on board. These brothers were active politicians, contributing generously to the Tammany machine; but that didn't help them so much in violating the Federal law. For that it was safer to be Republicans!

XII

"Get money!" said the world to Kip Tarleton. "Get rich!" It was America, the land of unlimited opportunities, and it was so easy to "make your pile." "Everybody's getting their's—why don't you get yours? What's the matter with you, boy?"—thus spoke New York.

There were so many brilliant and fascinating and thrilling things to spend money for! Kip would come out of the office at the foot of Park Avenue, and see the darlings of fortune lolling on cushioned seats, in limousines with balloon tires and liveried chauffeurs and footmen; from that he would plunge into the ill-smelling subway, and drop in his nickel, and be packed and sealed like asparagus in a can. He would lunch on a sandwich and a glass of milk at a drugstore counter, and then enter one of the rich hotels and see lawbreakers and their ladies dining in royal state. He saw perfectly tailored garments, and shimmering silks and glittering jewels; he saw all the treasures of the earth revealed to his eyes—but protected from his hands by plate-glass windows.

It was a fact that the best brains of the country were being set to the task of tempting Kip Tarleton to spend money; preparing allurements, physical, mental, and moral, every sort that the wit of man could devise. Trained psychologists were put at work, a whole new science was devised, to set traps for his pocket-book, to extract the contents therefrom. Kip himself was no philosopher, and had but a scanty notion of the social system under which he lived; but he felt the impact of these temptations, which there was no escaping, even though he became a hermit in the wilderness. Sooner or later the hermit would have to come back to civilization to buy salt; and

there would be the trader, offering him several brands of salt at varying prices, and explaining that the best was necessary to his health. How was the hermit to know that all the various brands had come out of the same kettle?

Kip was no hermit, but a citizen of Manhattan, now nearly thirty, and the father of a family; and what a disgrace to be so poor! When he walked the streets, the billboard advertisements assailed his eyes, and the radio-stores blared the same messages to his ears. When he was wedged in the subway car, he stared at advertisements; if he got a seat, and room to spread a newspaper, there was the appeal of "nationally advertised products," holding out rewards, and warning of dire penalties if he failed to take the national advertisers' advice. Did he realize that the diet of his family would be deficient in vitamin C, if he failed to feed them the juice of six dozen California oranges per diem—at a price slightly less than the entire salary Kip's government was paying him? Did he realize that his gums would decay unless he protected them with Mugg's Mouthwash, at seventy-three cents per bottle in the chain drug-stores? Did he know how apt he was to develop cancer of the throat, unless he used Coughless Cigarettes, treated under a process endorsed by twenty-two thousand heads of American hospitals?

And all the cultural opportunities he was missing! The books he had no money to buy and no leisure to read! The music he had no time to hear, the theatre tickets that were forever out of his reach! The charms that his home was missing, through failure to be equipped with Tasty Toasters, and Hyperborean Refrigerators, and Electickle Hair-restorers! Did he realize with what contempt his guests would look upon him, if his dining-room were not equipped with Peerless Plate, his drawing room with Overstuffed Fatboy Furniture? Did he realize the thrills he missed through failing to behold the darling of his bosom in crepe-de-chine Love-nest Nighties and Sveltcut step-ins of pink silk, at twelve-fifty per suit in all the Girlie Shoppes? By responding to even a few of these allurements, Kip might easily have spent his monthly salary every day; he might even have spent all the bribes that were offered him, and still have fallen short of true elegance and refinement in his home.

XIII

But Maggie May continued to wear her blue silk dress in which she had come to New York; and Kip went about his grim duties

in a suit which had served him at Broadhaven. When he was thrown out of a speakeasy on his head, and found his coat ripped up the back, his mother sewed it as neatly as possible, and he went on wearing it. He looked tired, and discouraged now and then, but he plodded on, driven by a deep-rooted malady—stubbornness, fanaticism, perversity as yet unclassified by the psychiatrists. The very men whom he was hounding would look at him, puzzled, as if he were a five-legged calf or a bird with fur instead of feathers. "Jees, feller," said Ikey Fineman, "what's the matter with you? Are you funny in the head?"

Ikey was a little Jew, with quick black eyes and a glib tongue, and Kip had just taken a couple of hundred dollar bills from him, and stuffed them into his pocket, and then told him he was under arrest, and gone to the telephone and asked the office to send somebody to help him collect evidence on a "cutting plant" he had run into by accident. While waiting for help to come he sat in a storeroom, surrounded with kegs and casks, and tubs of creosote for making Scotch, and boxes of labels reading "Dewar's Whisky." He kept his prisoner covered with a gun, and now and then took a quick glance around, lest some one might be stealing up behind him. But Ikey Fineman told him not to worry, there wouldn't be no rough stuff, he had been in trouble before, and had a good lawyer; this would cost him several "grand," but he would be let in on one of the "bargain days," and be back at the old stand.

But meanwhile, he was trying to figure out what a guy like Kip got out of it. Did it give him pleasure to try to send somebody to jail? Did he like to pull this "kid stuff," holding up a fellow with a gun? "And tell me, do you like to wear an eight-year-old overcoat?"—thus Ikey, not meaning to be personal, or anything like that, but moved by human curiosity; it was a problem in psychology. "I was in the clothing business, so I know the cut of that overcoat, and I can tell when you bought it—that is, if it was new. You could get one like it second-hand down on Baxter street for a dollar and a half. Fifteen years ago, when I come through Ellis Island, a greenhorn with everything I had tied up in a bundle, I'd have worn a coat like that, but never since. What's the idea, feller?"

"The coat keeps me warm," said Kip.

"And you don't care how it looks? Your girl don't care? What does the government pay you for this job?—if it ain't a secret."

"It's a matter of record—two thousand a year."

"Well, I could pay you two thousand a month to start off, and if you made yourself useful, like a Federal man could, you'd be getting two thousand a week before you got through."

Kip smiled. It would do no harm to be sociable. "That happens to be what they offered my chief when he first took charge. One of his old friends invited him to the club, and ordered lunch, and then told him he represented a group of distillers, who would pay him two thousand a week if he would let them know when the agents were to pay their visits."

"Yeah, he could do that," said Ikey, with expert authority.

"Well, he walked out, and left the great lawyer to eat his two lunches alone."

"It beats me," said the proprietor of the "cutting-plant," shaking his head. "I don't understand what you guys get out of life."

XIV

The explanation was easy, so far as Kip was concerned; he could say it in four words: "Whisky killed my father." But what was the answer for the other men in the service? He used to look at them and wonder. Take, for example, the experience of Jake Perry and a younger agent whom he was breaking in; a story which made a deep impression on the whole personnel. These two fellows were driving in a car on some government errand in Westchester county, and at a lonely spot they passed what looked to be a "wood-road," leading into a dense patch of timber. "That looks queer to me," said Jake; "did you notice the marks of trucks going in there? That road has had a lot of traffic." They turned in to investigate—and found a large distilling plant, worth about a hundred thousand dollars, turning out two thousand gallons of corn sugar alcohol per day.

They exhibited their shields to the proprietor, and he was amiable about it—he could afford to be, since he had been running more than a year, and a couple of months' operations was sufficient to pay the cost of the outfit. "How did you boys happen to come here?" he inquired, and they told him they had stumbled on the place by accident. "Nobody else knows it?" inquired he; and when they said "No," he took out his pass-book at the local bank. "Now, listen, boys," said he. "You can see I'm playing square with you. I've got twenty thousand dollars in this bank, and I'll drive into the village, and you can follow in your car, and I'll go in and draw

out every cent, and pay it to you, and you can go about your business and not say a word, and neither will I."

Jake's answer was to go to the phone and call the office, and land the proprietor and half a dozen of his men in jail—for a couple of hours. The odd thing was the way the temporary prisoner told that story—to Mr. Doleshal, and to everybody in the office whom he encountered. His astonishment was a matter for laughter. "By God, I never had anything like that happen to me in my life! Those fellows could have had ten thousand apiece in hard cash, and if they'd come back for more later on, I'd have had no kick."

The facts about Jake Perry, as Kip knew them, were these. He was an ex-serviceman, who had been banged up in the war, and was none too well. He had a wife and four or five kids, and some of them were sick, and he was burdened with debts, and having the devil's own time to get along. He wore an old suit of clothes—in all the years Kip saw him, he never had a new suit. Yet he had turned down a ten thousand dollar bribe, just because of a sense of duty, and respect for himself!

Did the Department want to show what it thought of such a man? Here was what happened a month or two later. Jake and his partner were cruising in that same government car, and got a flat tire; the casing was worn so thin they decided it wasn't safe for chasing rum-runners, so they paid for a new tire out of their own pockets; and when they put that on their expense account, Mr. Doleshal had to fight with his superiors in Washington for months before he could get the money for them. Washington scrutinized every penny spent by the service—"like an old miser," said Mr. Doleshal, "or like somebody who doesn't want enforcement pressed too hard!"

It was hard to build up morale in the face of incidents such as that. The deputy administrator, needing somebody to pour out his heart to, would take Kip into his confidence. "I've been at this job now for six years, and before heaven, I don't know what the policy is. Do they want me to enforce the law, or to forget it?"

Kip replied, "I guess they want you to enforce it moderately."

"Yes!" said Mr. Doleshal. "Just enough to please the drys, and not enough to displease the wets!"

"My wife puts it this way," said Kip: "let the drys have their law, and let the wets have their whisky!"

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN . . . *SACRIFICE*

I

FOR two years Kip performed his dangerous duties as member of the "alcohol squad." In vermin-ridden cellars and filthy attics in tenement and warehouse districts he uncovered "cutting plants," in which raw alcohol was diluted and flavored, and with crude bottling machinery and forged labels was made up as the "real thing." He helped to run down a gang of stamp counterfeiters who had gone into the more profitable work of making engraved plates for labels and seals; in their headquarters were found labels for four million bottles of "Gordon Gin," "White Horse Whisky," "Old Smuggler"—it appeared that the bootleggers had been at their work some time before prohibition. He would raid "cleaning plants" in which vile-smelling denatured alcohol was redistilled in copper or iron boilers—"washing the stuff," it was called. There would be tubs of acetone, and of juniper water for gin, and of nasty creosote compositions; there would be "straw overcoats" which had been dipped in sea-water, to support claims of "just off the boat"; there would be packing-cases with oversea shipping-marks cunningly forged. There would be every sort of device to fool the fools, and only one thing missing—a single bottle of real gin, brandy, whisky, or rum.

The conditions under which liquor was being prepared for the wealthy of New York were filthy beyond all telling. It was an outlaw business, at which men worked with guns on their hips and sometimes in their hands; they were here today, and elsewhere tomorrow, and if it was a cellar-hole with no toilet but a corner of the room, what difference did it make? There were no laws under which the authorities of New York City could prevent the manufacture and sale of liquor; but there were laws of sanitation, applying to all food and drink factories, under which the Board of Health could have closed hundreds of these places. Every now and then the Federal administrator would call the attention of the health authorities to these conditions, but in vain.

No, let the "Feds" do it! Let the "Feds" dive into black cellars with stinking dirt floors, and dark attics with rotting boards underfoot and cobwebs half-blinding their eyes; flashlights in their left hands and guns in their right, and who could guess what enemies lurking behind kegs and piles of packing-cases? You were allowed to shoot—but not until you had been shot at. Kip lacked experience in shooting, and his government omitted to provide training; after being shot at a couple of times, he went to practice at a target-gallery, with cartridges paid for out of his own slender purse. He continued to wear the old suit of clothes which had been ripped up the back and mended; and for this most of his friends felt sorry for him, and a trifle embarrassed when they met him on the street.

Yes, it was too bad that a decent fellow should have gone into such a disreputable business; making himself into a snooper and a sneak, lying to people, and taking advantage of their hospitality to betray them and send them to jail! So the public thought about a prohibition agent: why should any man take up such a career, unless he was "getting his," like other politicians and their henchmen? The bibulous old gentlemen who had lived at the Tarleton House shook their heads sadly, and said, of course you could forgive poor Kip, considering what he had been through with his father. A good scout old Pow had been, but weak, couldn't carry his liquor; but was that any reason why those who *could* carry it should be deprived of life's main solace? No, it was a crazy idea, hatched in the brains of religious fanatics. The law could never be enforced, and it was silly to try, because good liquor never hurt any man unless he took too much, and anyhow, what a man did to himself was his own business, and not that of policemen and government officials.

II

It was the same with the rich friends whom Kip had met in and about New York: the stockbrokers and country-club members from the far end of Long Island; the Park Avenue hostesses to whom Roger and Jerry had introduced him; the stage celebrities and literary lights who frequented the "Golden Jail." With all such persons it was safer to content yourself with a brief "Howdydo" in passing, and not to stop and chat about old times. In the first place, such persons were patrons of the bootleggers you were sending to jail, and naturally did not thank you for meddling. They

held you responsible for the high price they had to pay, as well as for the rotten quality they got; if they happened to have a headache that morning, you were the cause, and to hell with you!

With the Fessenden family—all except Cousin Jenny—it was a state of war. When Kip happened to meet Mrs. Ralston, the former Countess Ensenada, in the lobby of one of the swanky hotels, that haughty young matron tossed her nose into the air and went by with a look that was supposed to freeze his blood. But he only smiled, for he knew that the "service" was on the trail of Richard Fessenden's bootlegging ring, and he had heard Major Mills say that sooner or later he was going to land that great banker behind bars. Kip personally had nothing to do with this case, but Fessenden wouldn't believe that, nor would his daughter; they doubtless imagined Kip as joining the service from motives of spite, and doing his best to set the government upon the family. As it happened, it was Fessenden who was destined to "break" Major Mills, and not Major Mills who was destined to "break" Fessenden; but nobody could be sure of that, and Kip was in the position of a man who had come to a gentleman's country home and accepted hospitality, kindness, and a well-paid job, and repaid his friends and employers by a base betrayal and a personal feud.

Kip got news of the Fessendens from several sources. There were items in the society columns, which the old ladies read diligently, and would report at the dinner-table. There was the financial news, which in these sensational days frequently broke out of the section allotted to market reports. Thus one afternoon Kip saw on the stands a headline half-way across the page: "BANKER CLEANS UP IN MARKET RISE." He read how the president of the Fessenden Trust and of the Fessenden National was reported to have made six millions in yesterday's sensational rise in Electric Motors. He took the paper home, and remarked to the family that perhaps Mr. Fessenden would now feel rich enough, so that he would not have to use his private harbor for rum-running.

A good guess, as it proved! A month or two later Mrs. Pollock, the druggist's wife from Seaview, came to have lunch with Kip's mother and aunt, and brought a week's supply of gossip. Mr. Fessenden had rented the place adjoining his own, and it was occupied by one of the "dummy" directors of his bank, and used by the rum-boats. Other items, also; there was a rumor that Master Bobbie, now nineteen years old, was in a sanitarium to be cured of alcoholism. No doubt the Tarletons had seen in the paper about

the goings on of Master Dick, who had celebrated his graduation from college by buying out a popular "girl show" for a week, and inviting all his fraternity brothers of the United States to come and help themselves. It appeared that Master Dick had inherited money from his paternal grandmother, and had told his father to go to blazes, and it was rumored they had had a fist-fight in the mansion. Every one agreed that poor Mrs. Fessenden looked ten years older.

Also, included in the news from Seaview, was the singular experience of the Reverend Alfred Conyngham Frobisher, rector of Christ Church, Episcopal. The Reverend Frobisher was accustomed to go out for a "constitutional" every evening, after his work on the manuscript of an analysis of the Old Slavic Josephus. One summer evening he walked too far, and feeling tired, decided to avail himself of a "lift." A car was coming, and he stood in the center of the highway with uplifted hand. A great truck came to a halt with a shrieking of brakes; and the clergyman, with outstretched hand, had opened his mouth to speak, when the driver of the truck leaned out, and put something into his hand, and then shifted gears, and with a mighty roaring of his engine, started on. Much puzzled, the Reverend Frobisher saw the truck speed away; then, striking a match, he discovered in his hand a crisp, new, hundred-dollar bank-note, bearing the imprint of the Fessenden National Bank!

III

To Kip's sorrow he discovered that his disreputable career was going to interfere with old and tried friendships. Even Jerry Tyler was going to "high hat" him! Jerry was no longer a free-lance editor and merry blade; he had taken a leap up the ladder of success, resigning his position as associate editor of the "Gothamite," and signing a contract for five years' service as "public relations counsel" for a group of water-power companies. This enormous concern, which furnished electricity for half a dozen states, having obtained its franchises by wholesale bribery, and capitalized its properties at eight times their cost, now wished to pay dividends on all this watered stock, and at the same time be known as a public benefactor. The directors were looking around for some versatile genius who knew how to make any shade of black appear white; and the chairman of the board had met Jerry and his wife at one of

those Park Avenue dinner-parties—no wonder writers and artists attend such functions! He had read Jerry's delightful jibing at wowsers and bluenoses and Socialists and all other varieties of pests; so now here were Jerry and Eleanor having their own Park Avenue apartment, at an annual rental of twenty thousand dollars!

Kip ran into his old friend, sitting in a magnificent custom-built limousine, while the chauffeur went inside to do some errand. Jerry was growing portly, and allowing others to do the running. He was dressed "up to the minute," according to his new social status; his heavy, dark eyebrows were set in a stern gaze, like some old Roman emperor. Kip got the distressing impression that there was less cordiality in his greeting. Could it be that Jerry was ashamed to have his chauffeur see him talking with anybody as "seedy" as Kip? Or was he afraid that his down-and-out friend might try to borrow some of his surplus of money? Either that—or else Jerry was beginning to take his own ideas seriously. When one is young and carefree, one can make a joke of everything; but when a man carries the burden of a five year contract at a hundred thousand a year, his cleverness is no longer a laughing matter.

Yes, they were all moving up into regions beyond Kip's reach, even beyond his ken. Roger Chilcote had married his Anita of the "Golden Jail"; and while neither of them would dream of snubbing Kip, their way of life was so remote from his that he felt himself lost in their company, and preferred getting his news about them out of the newspapers.

For Roger was a "headliner," as he had always been; Roger the resplendent one, to whom adventures came swarming like bees to a honey-pot. He and his beloved had done their best to avoid publicity; two weeks after the death of old Mr. Tydinge, they had motored to a small village in Connecticut, and had themselves quietly married by a justice of the peace. They had come back and settled down in the "Golden Jail," not even sending cards to their friends. But then one day the news had leaked to one of the "tabs"—and what an explosion they made of it!

Of course, they didn't say outright that Roger and the widow of old Francis Tydinge had lived together before the latter's death; but the editors had practiced for years the art of telling things in indirect and subtle ways. They said it was rumored that the playwright and the fashionable beauty were old and close friends; that Roger was reported to have made her the heroine of one of his plays; that he had written a play called "The Golden Jail," which

had to do with a young wife of an elderly rich husband who had a handsome young lover; and that the Tydinge home had for years been playfully referred to as "The Golden Jail"—for the reason, no doubt, that it had so many bars in front of its doors and windows.

One of the later editions even went so far as to tell that Roger's new home had an Hawaiian surf-board set up against the wall of the drawing-room; and how one of the intimate friends of the gay young couple had kidnapped this surf-board, and carried it off to Greenwich Village, where a well-known artist in wood-carving had engraved upon it in beautiful old Gothic letters the words of Virgil: "Omnia Vincit Amor." In the event that modesty should cause the poet or his bride to turn that inscription to the wall, they would find on the other side the words of Romeo: "For stony barriers cannot hold love out."

But none of all this troubled Roger; this was New York, and New York's idea of publicity. Roger had got what he wanted, and nobody could take it away from him. He had the gorgeous beauty, whom he could dress in the robes of a queen. Also he had her treasure, which he proceeded to use after the fashion of Lorenzo dei Medici; he was resolved to go down into history, not merely as America's greatest imagist poet and tragic dramatist, but also as a patron prince. The doors of the "Golden Jail" were thrown wide to poets, playwrights, musicians, painters, sculptors—any who had the divine gift, regardless of their social status, or how eccentric their costumes, manners or morals. Roger would be their host, their friend, patron, and guide. He carried out his threat of presenting the "old junk" to the Metropolitan Museum, and the walls of the "Golden Jail" now blazed with the challenge of modernist revolt. Young poets of genius had their works issued in small editions of exquisite refinement—Roger put a lot of money into a publishing house, merely that he might be free to give orders of this sort. Nor did it matter any longer what the managers said about his grim and depressing plays; he would wave his hand, and order the finest production on Broadway, and when the critics went wild over the result, he would advertise it freely, and so at last the American populace would learn about real art.

Anita bore another child, a girl this time, and according to prophecy, her hair was of fine-spun threads of gold, and Roger chanted over again his barbaric song of triumph. But three was enough,

Anita declared; she had done her duty to genius, and came to Maggie May to ask for the precious secret of contraception. Maggie May gave it to her; as she gave it to the young matrons of the church congregations, who yearned timidly for the forbidden lore, without knowing where to apply. What an odd development, that a female wowser, conducting a crusade in the cause of law enforcement and law obedience, should be secretly conducting a school for lady law-breakers! It was an underground revolution, blazing furiously, like a fire in a buried coal-mine!

IV

For a year and a half Kip had watched the career of a prohibition administrator who believed that the law should be enforced against big violators as well as little. Everything that could be done to break a man was tried against this stubborn West Pointer. Women made efforts to get him alone in hotel-rooms and taxi-cabs, and when such attempts failed, "poison pen" letters were sent to his wife, and threats to waylay him, until she was brought to the verge of nervous breakdown. So many old-time friends sought to influence him, that his family was forced to cut out all social relations. So many offers were made in his office, that he put one of his subordinates in the room, with orders never to leave him alone. He kept a record of the various inducements, and when he was through, he told Kip the total; assuming that all promises had been kept he would have had thirty thousand dollars a week, a million in retaining fees as attorney for bootleggers' rings—and finally the governorship of New York State!

What broke him was pressure from Washington. Impossible to enforce a law against big offenders, when it meant tens of millions out of the pockets of powerful persons who had put up campaign funds to elect presidents and senators and congressmen! When the cabinet member in charge of enforcement had made the greater part of his fortune out of the distillery business, and had relatives and intimates still in that business! Imagine trying to break a ring of rum-runners, and discovering behind the ring, taking a large share of the profits, the heads of the county political machine, who had named the judge before whom the criminals would be tried! Imagine trying to jail financiers like Richard E. Fessenden, who had private telephone wires to Washington, and could call up senators and cabinet members, and remind them of favors done—and even,

in case of extreme danger, of financial scandals which could be brought out against them!

Calvin Coolidge, the "strong silent statesman," had announced that he did not "choose" to run for another term. He was a canny Yankee, and saw trouble in the offing; he stepped out, leaving a red hot poker to be picked up by a trusting member of his cabinet. So now began a new epoch in American history; a great engineering brain was going to be applied to affairs, and people would see the advantages of a business government instead of a political one. The Great Engineer believed in prohibition, so he said on the stump; he called it "an experiment noble in motive." He would announce his determination to enforce the law, and the newspapers would put that announcement on the front page; but then would come telegrams of protest from wet politicians and bankers—whereupon the Engineer would explain to the newspaper reporters that of course he didn't mean it so severely, and ask them to tone down their accounts of his purposes. This turned out to be the engineering idea of the art of government; to announce a policy one day, and when it was criticized, to take it back, and perhaps say that he had been misrepresented. After a year or two of that kind of government, the Engineer had made himself more heartily despised by newspaper correspondents than any man who had ever occupied the White House.

President Hoover had inherited the policy of five percent enforcement; and as proof of his nobility of motive, he would ask Congress to appropriate more funds, so that the service might be strengthened, and the country might have five and one-quarter percent enforcement, and, in course of time, even five and one-half. At the end of the eight years which the engineering brain hoped to give to his country, it might even be possible to achieve five and seven-eighths percent enforcement. But of course, nothing drastic; nothing to jeopardize that charter of prosperity which the Great Engineer had presented to the common people upon accepting the nomination to high office. Poverty was to be abolished in our great republic, and plenty and security would be the lot of the humblest toiler. So of course it would not do to cancel the permits of those hundreds of independent denaturing plants, which had been set up for the purpose of diverting ethyl alcohol from manufacturing channels into bootleg channels! Nor to interfere with "personal liberty" and business hospitality in our great cities! Nor

to embarrass the banks, whose "insiders" had invested so much money in the fastest growing business in America!

No, the prohibition laws would be enforced, as all other laws were enforced, against the little fellow, who had no influence and did not count. Raids and arrests would make a splurge in the newspaper columns, and please the dry voters. No one would ask what happened afterwards, and how many of the violators would be let off with hundred dollar fines, by judges who had no sympathy with the law; nor how much money the criminals would take in from their law-breaking while waiting for their "bargain day" in court! You would read that the calendars of the Federal courts were choked with twenty cases; but you would not find the engineering brain suggesting the setting up of secondary courts to try liquor cases, in states which had permitted the Constitution to be nullified. It was obvious that such courts would have paid their way in fines collected; but the engineering brain was afraid lest too many voters might be led to lose interest in the "experiment noble in motive," and be lured by the siren song of wet Democracy!

V.

Maggie May came into personal touch with the great governing minds which were solving the prohibition problem. There had been proposed in Congress no less than seven resolutions to amend the Eighteenth Amendment, and a committee had been appointed to conduct hearings for and against the propositions. This turned into a free-for-all debate on prohibition, taking the front pages of newspapers for months. The wets brought out their biggest guns, and the drys followed suit. Among others, they presented a string of ladies, active in the prohibition cause, each of whom delivered a five-minute address to the patient congressmen. Maggie May, being young, good-looking, and wise beyond her years, was one of these chosen orators; and this wowser stirred up a hornets' nest, by referring to the "representatives of brewers and distillers" who had been appearing before the committee. Instantly there leaped into action an ardent "wet" congressman from New York, who considered the committee insulted, and challenged Mrs. Tarleton to produce the names of any "representatives of brewers and distillers" who had been heard. He raked the witness over the

coals for five or ten minutes; long enough for her husband to hunt out the data, and slip into her hand a reminder that one of the principal wet champions had been the chairman of an association, which admitted having among its contributors no less than twenty-three brewing and distilling firms, or individuals at the head of such firms! What a pleasure it gave Maggie May to read to Congressman La Guardia a string of names such as Anheuser and Busch and Ruppert and Pabst—to say nothing of the California State Brewers' Association, and the Manufacturers' and Dealers' League of New York!

Maggie May came back from Washington, full of stories of what was going on there, and all over the country. From every state the women brought the same report; prohibition was being strangled by politics, and the law was enforced only against little fellows, who had no "pull." There was no power in the land that could touch the big ones. The vice-president of the United States owed his nomination to a notorious bootlegger and ex-convict, who had financed his political "clubs" all over the country. Now this man counted his fortune in seven figures, and he was the powerful "fixer" who could get for a fake "denaturing plant" a permit to increase its purchases of alcohol to a million gallons a year without the need of showing any customers. It was now the "Oklahoma gang" that ruled Washington, instead of the "Ohio gang"; but whichever it was, the prohibition administrators took orders from millionaire gangsters and their attorneys.

Maggie May could tell Kip more about his own office than Kip himself had been able to find out. Kip was like a man wandering in a forest, able to see only a few trees; but his wife had been up in an airplane, and brought back a map of the country. Those mysterious happenings at election-time, in the fall of 1928, when the "internal guards" had been removed from the near-beer breweries of New York! That had been because the Hoover-Curtis campaign managers had decided that the city was too dry, and the voters were swinging to Al Smith! The head of the prohibition service had written to all his administrators a confidential letter, commanding them to "soft-pedal" enforcement! They had appointed as Federal attorney in the New York district, a man who prosecuted only thirty-nine out of the two thousand cases which Kip and his fellow-agents had made; and this man was planning to run for governor, on the basis of his being able to do more for the liquor-rings than the Democrats were doing!

VI

Kip's personal problem was made easier by the fact that Congress passed a bill, increasing the salaries of prohibition agents to a minimum of twenty-three hundred dollars. A twenty-five dollar a month raise wouldn't have seemed much to Roger Chilcote, the husband of an heiress, nor to Jerry Tyler, the public relations counsel, nor to Roy Ralston, of Wall Street, in the midst of the biggest bull market in history. But it enabled Kip to get a new suit of clothes, and to pay the doctor when the baby fell ill, and now and then to bring home a bunch of flowers for his wife to wear on a lecture platform.

He would have been completely happy if only his work had been going better. If he had not had to see big rascals paying their small fines, and laughing in his face as they walked out of court! If only he could have seen a little progress—say from five and one-half to five and five-eighths percent enforcement! The prohibition service had now been made a part of the Department of Justice, and the number of agents had been increased to more than three hundred; but what good did it do, when nobody made any use of the evidence they collected?

There was yet another director in Washington, who gave valiant interviews to the press, saying that he was going after the big fellows. Privately, to his agents and administrators, he would say that of course the Federal government couldn't undertake to do police-work; the main reliance must be in education, and the hope that the new generation wouldn't be so anxious to break the law. Meantime, it wouldn't do to stir up controversy, because there was another election campaign on the way, that of 1932, and there would be votes at stake in the nominating convention!

Mr. Doleshal had learned to have confidence in Kip. He liked him personally, and now and then when their lunch-hour happened to coincide, they would go out together, and discuss their problems. Mr. Doleshal had to have somebody he could tell his troubles to; the sufferings of an able-minded man, held back from his job by inefficiency or worse. Recently there had come to him a proposition from a man in the employ of a big brewery which was regularly violating the law; this informer told what was going on, and offered, for a reward of two hundred and fifty dollars, to arrange so that two Federal agents might be introduced into the place, and have a chance to get evidence. The man proposed to carry out his part

of the bargain before he was paid; and Mr. Doleshal submitted the proposition to Washington—and it was turned down! The great rich government of the United States couldn't afford two hundred and fifty dollars to close an illegal brewery!

"It really seems they don't *want* the law enforced," said the official, glumly.

"As a matter of fact," said Kip, "why shouldn't the law provide that a percentage of the fines should always go to the informer?"

"If that were done, we'd have the inside dope on every big law-breaker in the country. If the department would even agree to let us have the money we take in fines, to be used in investigation and enforcement! But no—we have to think about politics in New York! President Hoover might lose the State next year!"

"What's going to come of it all, Mr. Doleshal?"

"Don't ask me for prophesies," said the administrator. "Something is going to crack, for the illegal business is getting bigger than the government. I saw a report from Chicago the other day—the head of the beer-racket there gets twice as much in a month as the President of the United States in a year. When you offer such subsidies for crime, you are equipping the underworld to overthrow society. Let it go on, and it will require the United States Army to take Chicago away from the gangsters."

"I see they've elected a reform mayor," said Kip. "He promised to reduce the cost of beer from twenty-five cents a glass to fifteen."

"There you have it—a member of the gang making an offer to the voters And on strict big business lines, lower prices and larger consumption. In Reno they give divorces to the rich on bargain terms—you only have to stay forty-two days in town. To get you to spend freely in the meantime, the gambling halls and saloons run wide open, and the mayor says his ideal is a barrel of good corn whisky with a tin dipper on every street-corner. How many years will that go on, before the forces of graft are so powerful they refuse to count votes against them?"

"They are that powerful right now in New York," said Kip, with a laugh. "I know, because my father used to be an election official."

VII

Mr. Doleshal had heard, of course, that this young agent's wife was a lecturer on prohibition. The time came when Kip felt that he knew him well enough to invite him to one of the lectures. He

accepted and after the event they went to supper, in an obscure little place where they were not known, and therefore could pay the bill—just as if they did not have the shields of the government inside their coat-lapels. They had much to talk about, these three who were working on the same job, though in different departments, and from different motives.

The former football star was a person very appealing to ladies. He had expressive black eyes and wavy black hair, and a secret sorrow eating his heart. He had married a girl for her pretty face, and now had a wife who lived to "gad," and was discontented with her share of the meagre salary of a government executive. So Mr. Doleshal, who looked so capable and self-contained, was really unhappy, and inclined to be romantic in his attitude towards a female wowser. It seemed to him extraordinary that a woman should have brains enough to study public questions, and to come out on a platform and defend her convictions. The fact that she had taken to wearing nose glasses, and that now, at the age of thirty, her features were showing the effect of thinking, did not spoil her for him. He was extremely cordial in praise of her lecture, and Maggie May judged him an agreeable and sincere gentleman, and dreamed of converting him to a belief in the law he was trying to enforce.

Maggie May was finding it a soul-trying task, being a dry-campaigner in these days of reaction. The wets had got the money, and with the newspapers and magazines behind them, they were making a grand offensive upon the law. They were organized everywhere, among business men and society women, intellectuals and college boys; they were all idealists now, "prohibition reformers" and "temperance crusaders"—you would hear pretty soon of "whisky-saints" and "rum-prophets." They were turning all the moral codes of the nation upside-down—it became heroism to defy the law, and nobility of spirit to get drunk, because in this condition you helped to prove that prohibition was failing. The politicians were on the run, and the underworld saw itself sweeping into power on a tidal wave of booze.

So Maggie May was moved to put to Mr. Doleshal a question which haunted her waking hours, and deprived her of sleep. "Tell me, do you believe that prohibition *can* be enforced?"

The young official asked her: "Do you mean as a question of politics, or of administration?"

"I mean, assuming that we could elect public men who really believe in the law."

"Let me tell you, Mrs. Tarleton, what I'd like to do, if I were a capitalist looking for a business investment. From my experience, I'd sign a contract with the government, to organize a private enforcement staff, and dry up cities like Chicago and New York in three months. I wouldn't ask any powers except what the law now gives to our force. The only thing that would have to be guaranteed would be enough courts, so that I could have prompt action. I'd even agree to pay for the courts; I'd turn over to the government one-half of all amounts collected in fines, and from the sale of confiscated property. I'd use the other half for operating costs—and I'd pay the handsomest dividends ever earned by a corporation in the United States."

"People argue that the temptations to graft are too strong, Mr. Doleshal; that you couldn't find honest agents."

The answer was this: "Every executive in business knows there is crookedness; men take commissions and rake-offs, and work for somebody else but their employers. But you catch the crooks and weed them out; gradually, if you're fit for the responsibility, you get a staff of men who are loyal to the business and proud of its success. Believe me, I wouldn't have to send so many to jail, either—not so many as we send now. The word would go out that the jig was up, and the bootleggers would quit. At present there is no enforcement, because the politicians don't want it, and the crooks know they don't want it. Politics and bootlegging are one machine, in Washington as in New York and Chicago. It's up to the people to break that conspiracy, or face a revolution, as certain as anything in the world's history."

VIII

One bright sunshiny afternoon in spring, Maggie May was standing at the window looking out over the park, and thinking she would treat herself to the luxury of a long walk. The children were out somewhere, with the two old ladies, and she would find them, and put problems out of her mind for an hour or two. But as she was putting on her hat, the phone rang; it was her sister-in-law, and half a sentence was enough to reveal that she was in tears. "Oh, Maggie May, I'm ashamed to call on you; but I'm in dreadful trouble!"

"What is it, Anita?"

"Roger is drunk!"

"Oh, my dear! How awful!"

"He didn't come home last night, and I was terrified. I've been phoning everybody I could thing of, and just now Jerry called, and said he had word that Roger was in a speakeasy, a place where they know him, and have been taking care of him ever since yesterday. He was helpless, and they put his money away to keep him from being robbed."

"And what's Jerry doing?"

"He's gone over to get him, and says he will take him to a private hospital. I wanted him brought home, but Jerry says he'll need expert care."

"Oh, Anita, I'm so sorry! Has this been going on for long?"

"I've known he was drinking for months, and I did everything I could think of to stop him, and he promised—he kept promising, and I kept hoping. I was ashamed for you to find out about it."

"It never does any good to hide it, dear. You'll have to learn—it's better to speak out."

"Maggie May, do you suppose Kip could help? He seems to have such a good influence with Roger."

"Kip will do anything he can, of course. What are you going to do now?"

"I don't know, I'm simply distracted."

"I was just going for a walk. I'll come over."

Maggie May phoned to Kip, who was out at that time of day. She left a message for him to call his sister-in-law. Then she had her walk across the park—but not without problems in her mind.

Anita sat amid the symbols of worldly glory; a boudoir equipped according to Roger's opulent fancy, all golden splendor, like a setting from the Arabian nights. In a luxurious overstuffed chair with a cloth-of-gold cover, sat a luscious beauty, ripe, almost wanton, like a full-blown rose in mid summer—motionless, staring before her, with a face like a mask of grief, and tears running slowly down her cheeks without her seeming to be aware of them.

"Oh, Maggie May," she quavered, "I'm ashamed to look at you. You told me everything, and I didn't have sense enough to realize it. I'm a fool! I'm a fool!"

"Tell me how it began, dear."

"It was the accursed stuff that my first husband left behind, in the cellar. I ought to have got rid of it, as you told me. But Roger said it would be such a waste."

"There is only one way to waste liquor, Anita; that is to drink it."

"I know, I know—every word you said was true. But Roger managed to persuade me; he said that you—that you——"

"I know, dear, Roger has a persuasive tongue, and many excuses. He told you I was an extremist, and couldn't see straight on this subject. He told you he had gone without liquor a long time, and proved that he could do it——"

"How well you know him, Maggie May!"

"I've known a number of drinkers, dear, and their talk is always the same. It's like listening to phonograph records."

"He said he would give the contents of the cellar to his friends; and for a long time he did that. They used to make a ceremony—they would carry away a bottle apiece, and I could see how Roger followed each one with his eyes. You know, there are so many labels, and they all mean something to him—each is like a poem."

"I know those poems by heart," said Maggie May. "They were written in Grandpa Chilcote's cellar."

"Of course, sooner or later, the crowd was bound to open a bottle and taste it; and I suppose it tastes especially good when you've waited so long. Anyhow, I began to smell liquor on Roger's breath; and then, what was I to do? You hate to turn into a scold, and ruin your home. And everybody is against you—the whole world—it's like a tide that carries you along."

"You ought to have come to me, Anita. I am the one who dares to be disagreeable."

"I know," said the wife, "but I was terrified. I went to Jerry Tyler, because I thought—well, a man would know more about men."

"And Jerry told you to be pleasant about it, and not interfere with the comfort of the male animal!"

"He said I'd only drive Roger to more drinking if I nagged at him. Roger has that proud streak——"

"Oh, that drunkard's talk—how I loathe it! You'll even hear them say that prohibition has had the effect of causing people to drink who wouldn't have drunk otherwise. A lot of the fools actually believe that about themselves!"

"Yes, I know, Maggie May—it's a regular formula. I've even wondered, myself."

"Don't let them fool you, Anita. People drink because they like the effect of alcohol upon their nerves. It starts as a pleasure, and it ends as a disease. But they can't bear to admit their slavery,

and so they rationalize it—invent a lot of phrases to make themselves seem heroic; they are brave social rebels, defying tyranny, and defending their sacred right to make sots of themselves! I suppose Jerry told you that I had something to do with Roger's drinking, because I nagged at him."

"Yes, he does think that, Maggie May." Anita admitted it with a little anxiety; but Maggie May smiled over Jerry's opinion of her.

"I wonder how he explains my poor father, who never had anybody to nag—only a dear, kind slave-wife who adored him, and hung on his every word, and held his head while he vomited, and when he vomited on the floor, got down on her knees and wiped it up herself, because she was ashamed to have the servants know about it, and have the gossip reach the outside world."

Anita clasped her two hands together. "Maggie May," she whispered, "that's the kind of a slave-wife I am! I did that a couple of months ago!"

"And Roger swore off, and promised you he wouldn't start again?"

"Yes, that is what he did."

"But you'll stick by him—and he knows it! You'll stay and let him drag you through hell."

Anita was twisting her hands together, and she turned her eyes away again. "I suppose a woman ought to be ashamed to feel about a man as I do. But I've tried, and it's no use—I am one of the slave-women. He touches me and my whole being turns to soft wax, and he can do anything he pleases with me. I think of defying him, and I think—he might leave me, some other woman would get hold of him; I know I couldn't stand it! I would do anything, follow him anywhere, turn into a drunkard myself."

"It's going to be hard on the children, dear."

"Oh, I can't bear to think about them."

"You'd better make up your mind and tell them right away."

Anita's eyes came wide with horror. "Oh, Maggie May! That is impossible!"

"Do you imagine you can keep it from them, Anita? You may be sure, they know there is something wrong now, and are guessing as hard as they can. You'd better let me talk to them, and arm their young souls. Some one must explain to them that their father is the victim of a disease, and that it is hereditary, and they must begin to take care of themselves."

IX

The telephone rang. It was Kip, and Maggie May told him the situation, and he said he would come soon. But a few minutes later he called again; he had spoken to Mr. Doleshal, and was needed for that night—something important—he could not talk about it over the telephone, of course. Maggie May's heart was always in her throat when she heard that Kip was going on a raid; she never knew if she would see him, or hear his voice again. But like brave women whose husbands go to war, she choked back her emotion. "Take care of yourself, dear," she said. —Such were the last words that passed between them.

She walked back across the park, thinking about her sister-in-law, and the strange whim of fate which gave a woman everything with one hand, and took it all back with the other. She thought about her brother, and what were the chances of saving him, and the best way to set out about it. She thought about little Frank and Lucile, and a new problem in the life of a wowser—the technique of telling children that their father is a drunkard, and that they are carrying in their blood the seeds of a dreadful disease. Very certainly that task would devolve upon Maggie May, since Anita did not have the needed iron in her soul.

She was home again, and saw her own two darlings safely stowed away for the night. Little Roger Chilcote Tarleton bore the name, and no doubt the seeds of disease from both his grandfathers—but he was not going to develop them! Already at the age of six he was a perfect little wowser; he knew all about alcohol as the enemy of the human race, and all about prohibition, and the labors of his father and mother in the cause. He had been taken to a lecture, so as to see what that mysterious thing was like; and if Kip was not at home when he went to sleep, he never failed to ask: "Is papa after the bootleggers tonight?"

Maggie May told the two ladies about the experience of that afternoon, and there was much shaking of heads and sorrowful comment on the wayward nature of the male animal. What stories those old souls could tell, of sixteen years in a family hotel, and before that, among the hard-drinking relics of the first families of Virginia! There was no jeering at the Eighteenth Amendment in that family council; not one voice raised in behalf of "personal liberty." Anita telephoned, and gave the latest news, that Roger was in a certain private institution which specialized in the curing

of Broadway playwrights of dipsomania, at the price of two thousand dollars per playwright. As the first painful stage of the cure, he was in a strait-jacket, howling like the wolves Jerry Tyler had listened to on his moose-hunting trip to Canada last November.

Maggie May settled down to answering letters about her lecture dates; and in between sentences she would think of new points to score against John Barleycorn. She could not help thinking that some day her brother was going the way of his father; and an implacable wowser's mind pushed on to the thought, then she would have the duty of telling *his* story to the world! Yes, she would get one of the temperance societies to hire a theatre; since a theatre is the proper place for dramatic effects, they would hire the very one in which "The Golden Jail" had scored its sensational triumph. Maggie May would come out upon that stage, and standing on the very spot where Roger had made his speech on the opening night, she would tell the audience that "The Golden Jail" was not the name of a blank verse tragedy, nor was it a symbol for the marital state, nor was it a home of opulence in the east sixties of Manhattan; no, "The Golden Jail" was the name of a private hospital where men of genius and wit, princes of the spirit and paladins of love, were tied up in strait-jackets and laid upon cots while they howled in imitation of grey wolves of the far Northern wilderness!

X

Such were Maggie May's fancies, when suddenly the shrill telephone made her heart jump. It always did, when Kip was away at night—and now she found out why. It was Mr. Doleshal, and he said: "I have some bad news for you, Mrs. Tarleton. You must get yourself together. Kip has been shot."

"Oh, God!" cried Maggie May—and caught the table with one hand to steady herself. "You mean—he's dead?"

"No, he's not dead, but he may be badly hurt. He's on the way to the hospital."

"Oh, tell me, Mr. Doleshal! I'll bear it——"

"I'm telling all I can, Mrs. Tarleton, I only had a brief message over the phone. He's in an ambulance, and you'd better go to the hospital."

"Where is it?"

He gave her the name of the place, which was in Brooklyn. "Can you go alone? Or shall I come for you?"

"I'll go at once, Mr. Doleshal. The subway will be the quickest. Thank you for calling."

She hung up, and sank with her face in her arms upon the table, and gave way to frantic weeping. But no, she must get herself together; Kip might even now be dying; she must start without a moment's delay. She ran to old Mrs. Tarleton, who was in bed; she told her the news, and the place, and how to get there, if she wanted to follow. Maggie May could not wait—a single subway train might make the difference, as to whether she would ever speak to Kip again. She picked up her hat and her handbag, and fled to the street; a passing taxi took her to the subway station, and she paid the driver and ran down the stairs, and boarded a train. There she sat in a seat, such a picture of anguish that everybody stared at her; but she did not know they were there. Her lips were moving, like those of some old Catholic woman telling her beads. She was saying: "He's going to die! I always knew he would die! Life doesn't let anybody be so happy as we have been! Why should we be happy, when so many other people are miserable?" She would say: "I've got to face it. I've got to do what he would want me to do. I promised him I'd carry on."

There was no taxicab in sight when she came out of the subway. She ran most of the way to the hospital, and arrived breathless and gasping. To the clerk at the desk she said: "I am Mrs. Tarleton; my husband is a prohibition agent——" and she saw her doom in the look of pity on the girl's face. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Tarleton. Your husband was dead when he reached here." Maggie May reeled, and caught herself by the desk, and sank down, her head in her arms.

Kip was dead! Kip was dead! It had happened just as she had pictured it, every week-day for six years that she had seen him go out of the house; every night when he was on duty, and she had lain in her bed alone, haunted by visions of battle, murder, and sudden death. She had let him go, because he said it was his duty, and she had no words with which to oppose him. But now that he was gone—now that she was alone—she couldn't bear it, she couldn't live!

Attendants came and led her to a seat, murmuring words of sympathy. They were used to such scenes; death dwelt just around the corner from them. They knew that women go on living, even while they say they can't. Too bad! too bad! He had been shot through the hip, and the bullet had severed an artery, and he had bled to death before help arrived. He hadn't suffered much—she might

find some comfort in that. It was terrible, what these gangsters were doing; no one was safe any more. The killer had got away. The police had been here to interview the victim, but too late.

"Can I see him?" said Maggie May; and they took her to their chamber of death. He lay on a marble slab, covered with a sheet, which an attendant drew back. He looked perfectly peaceful, his eyes closed; his face was paler than usual, but otherwise he might have been in bed at home. Maggie May realized that he would never be at home again; she thought of the desolate years, and what home would be without him. A storm of memories swept over her —those memories which would have to suffice her instead of a husband. She broke down again, and they had to lead her away. No use to cherish grief; it was too bad, but he had done his duty, what he believed in, no doubt. Thus the nurse; and Maggie May said yes, and she had let him go. It was like a war; others had died, and more would die; women would have to face it.

She was getting herself together for the arrival of the poor old mother, who came in a few minutes later, even more breathless than Maggie May. It was harder for her, because she had had Kip longer, and knew him better—or so she thought. He was her only son, and all she had left. Maggie May had to find words to help her, to remind her of the children—and in thus comforting her, to comfort herself. They would call a cab and go home, and have their grief to themselves, and not trouble the kind people at the hospital, who had so much to do with illness and death.

XI

The story of Kip Tarleton would receive six or eight inches in each of the morning papers, under the headline: "FEDERAL AGENT SHOT." Such events were not featured by the metropolitan press; what interested them was when Federal men raided a dive, and were forced to use their guns, and some partisan of personal liberty and individual rights got hurt. Then there would be a front page story, with sensational details about prohibition enforcers running amuck and shooting inoffensive citizens. Such a story would mention that the raiders had had no warrants—even though it might be that the law required no warrants under the circumstances. There would be details about mothers of ten or twelve children arrested—but there would be no sob-story about Kip's children, no mourning crepe for widows of men who died

in the war with John Barleycorn. There were close to seventy names upon that death-roll already, but it was rarely referred to in the wet press.

Kip's death had occurred in a raid on a cleaning-plant concerning which he had collected evidence. The place was in the back part of an old, dingy factory in a rundown neighborhood near the docks. A United States marshal was in charge of the raid, and the agents were acting as his deputies; they rounded up half a dozen men in the office, and Kip was set to guard them, while the others explored the place. All the prisoners had been searched for arms; they were supposed to be handcuffed—such were the orders, but agents got careless, sometimes, and didn't bring enough handcuffs along. There wasn't much likelihood of trouble from men in a regular plant; no, they would know where to telephone, and the bondsmen would come running, they wouldn't even have to spend the night in jail. They would be turned loose, and the boss would buy new apparatus, and rent another warehouse, and in a week business would be going as usual.

What the Federal men had to expect was abuse; most of it not fit for the printed page. Men in the "alky-racket" appeared to be bad losers, and would do no end of "beefing." They would want to know why the "Feds" were picking on them, and why a fellow didn't get the protection he paid for; they would tell how hard up they were, and how much they had lost, and how many children they had at home. Or perhaps they would take the opposite tone, of defiance; they would tell what "pull" they had, and what they would do to their enemies, and how quickly they would be back on the job.

The principal danger in these raids lay in being mistaken for "highjackers." Since the alcohol traffic was outlawed, all who had to do with it must be ready to defend themselves. Rival gangs would raid them, free lance bandits would hold them up and rob them of their precious treasure; so they learned to shoot first and inquire afterwards. Entering a place on a raid, the agents would cry: "We are Federal men! You are under arrest by the government!" But unfortunately, the "highjackers" learned that trick, and when they were making a foray would cry the same thing, and exhibit imitation shields and "pocket commissions."

Into this situation there had recently entered a new element of danger. The Department of Justice had taken to finger-printing all persons arrested for liquor violations; the photographs would be

sent to Washington, and also checked up by the local and state police. So there would be interesting discoveries; here would be a man wanted for murder in Oregon, here a "yeggman" with several jail sentences awaiting him, here a burglar with a prison record of half his years, and now wanted for a police "line-up." Word of this had got out to the underworld, and an arrest became a more serious matter.

Kip had been set to watch half a dozen men. He stood with his back to an open door, and a gun in his hand, his prisoners backed against the other wall of the small office. One of them sat at the desk, a big Italian, dark and unprepossessing. He was "beefing," and while he "beefed," he rocked in the swivel-chair towards Kip and back again. "What the hell," and "Jesus Christ," and so on—and Kip paid no especial attention, because he was an experienced man, and knew how little talk means to such people. But suddenly the Italian started and shouted: "Don't shoot! These are Feds!" Kip whirled, thinking there was some one in the doorway behind him; the swivel-chair rocked once more, and the man reached to the drawer of the desk, jerked it open and pulled out a gun.

Kip was in the act of turning, and raising his own gun. The man fired from the hip, and the first shot struck Kip's wrist and knocked his weapon from his hand. The second shot missed, but the third struck him in the hip and brought him down. In a flash the half dozen men scattered by doors and windows, and were gone in the darkness. It was a matter now of the electric-chair, and they would "shoot it out," if necessary. But it wasn't; their friends hid them, and they got out of the city, and in due course were at work in other places. Gangland knew how to take care of its own.

Meanwhile, Maggie May paid her husband's funeral expenses; a government which curried the favor of wealthy tax-payers felt under no obligation to assist her in that respect. Having established the fact that her husband had lost his life in the course of active duty, she would be entitled to a widow's pension of fifty-seven dollars per month for the rest of her life. Just why the Big Father in Washington should have hit upon that precise sum was not explained to her; presumably he was not intending to advertise a great pickle-manufacturer—no, there must have been some reason known to the higher mathematics why six hundred and eighty-four dollars per year was exactly the amount it would cost the widows of soldiers, sailors, and prohibition agents to buy food, clothing and shelter for themselves and their orphan children.

One thing more, an expenditure for an envelope, a sheet of letter-paper, and the time of a stenographer—though not a postage-stamp, since the letter came under government frank, "Penalty for Private Use $300." The chief administrator wrote to Mrs. Tarleton, telling her what a splendid man her husband had been, and how faithfully and valiantly he had done his duty, and died as part of "an experiment noble in motive." Maggie May would have that letter framed, and hang it on the wall, and her children would show it to their children, in days when a prohibition agent would be less an object of ridicule.

XII

The second evening after Kip's funeral, his widow was scheduled to give a lecture in a New York church. The clergyman called up to express his condolences, and took it for granted that she would be unable to appear. But Maggie May, the fanatic, replied that she and her husband had discussed the possibility of his death, and she had promised it would not interfere with her work. She would keep her engagement, hoping that in the audience might be some young person who would take up his work for the cause.

Maggie May Chilcote Tarleton, once the gentle, demure little "lady" of a "proud old Southern home" was now put to the test, to show what it meant to have "Cavalier" blood in her veins. Yes, she would go; she would give the lecture if it killed her! She hated the Demon Rum, so that she no longer had to put his name in quotation marks. She hated him with all her soul—and with all her soul and body she would go forth to fight him. This Demon had taken her father, her brother, and now her husband. Kip, dear, patient, honest-eyed Kip, with the queer horizontal wrinkles across his bewildered brow! Kip, with the steadfast heart, which had been able to resist the bribers and refuse the bribes! Kip, who had looked so simple and boyish, had had the heart of a man, and his wife would need the heart of a man from now on. Women must learn not to weep, but to stand in the firing-line—for in no other way could the sons of women be saved! She would give the lecture, and the soul of Kip, her beloved, would stand by her on the platform!

There she was, pale and tense, wearing the old blue dress, and confronting a great throng. The clergyman, introducing her, told them what had happened, and there was an awed silence as she came forward. It was hard for her to make a speech that night, she admitted; but then, it had always been hard for her to

make a speech. In the part of the country from which she came, women's place was still the home. She had been driven to the public platform by the spectacle of the country falling into the hands of bribe-givers and bribe-takers. Naturally, the fact that these men of greed and violence had murdered her husband did not make her any the less aware of the danger.

Maggie May had to stop. She drew a deep breath; and then, because that did not restore her voice, she took off her hat with the bluebells on it and laid it on a chair behind her—just to have something to do, to hide her emotion from the audience. She had worn this hat the day she had come to New York for the second time, and Kip had met her at the station. Ten years ago! She had put it away, intending to keep it for anniversaries; but as time passed, there were always more urgent things to do with money than to buy new hats, and she had gone on wearing it for state occasions. All this came to her now, in a flood of memories. She would have to ask the audience to excuse her; there were so many things to remind a woman lecturer of her husband, who had never failed to sit on the platform, or close up in front, to give her courage.

She told about Kip's life, what it meant to be an agent in the prohibition service; to face, not merely the givers of bribes and the killers, but, in addition the distrust of the uninformed public. "You have soldiers and sailors, and in wartime you are glad of their aid, and honor them. For a prohibition agent it is always wartime, but even so, you do not help to build up his morale."

Maggie May had never given such a lecture as this. The despair which had been piling up in her heart, and which she had kept repressed—the floodgates were broken now, and it poured forth. What was going to become of a nation which reserved its highest money rewards for corruption, its highest political honors for hypocrisy? What was the meaning of churches, and of talk about a loving and merciful Father, in a land that was ruled by gangsters and their hired men? Tonight, as she spoke, men were making deals that involved the right to destroy people's homes, the right to commit murder, the right to seize the state; they were selling the power of the police, the courts, the presidency itself; they were taking the law away from the people, and making it an instrument of crime.

People knew these facts, they read about them in the papers; but they did not put them together and realize their meaning. America was going the way of all those empires which lay buried

in the dust-heaps of history. Each of these civilizations had been proud and self-satisfied, convinced that it was greater than any that had previously existed; each had decayed at the top, and been destroyed by parasitism, luxury, and greed—had perished with words of boasting on its lips. "O King, live forever," had been the formula of greeting of Nebuchadnezzar.

Men blamed the prohibition amendment for the sudden increase in corruption; and Maggie May, the wowser, agreed to this. We had outlawed the liquor traffic, and then failed to enforce our decree; the result was, the resources of an enormous industry had been added to the underworld army; the bribers had been richer than the governors, and bribery had become in ten years our governmental system. Now we had to make our choice, and quickly—either to enforce the law, or else back down and repeal it.

Maggie May talked about five percent enforcement, and the noble ideal of six percent enforcement towards which we were invited to struggle. There was a choice our political system put before the voters; either to bring in the wets, with their promise to repeal the amendment, which they couldn't possibly do; or else re-elect an administration which gave solemn pledges of enforcement, and then made it into a sickening farce. It asked from Congress an appropriation of twenty million dollars for the purpose; and the wets, desiring to ridicule prohibition, would propose an amendment to the bill, providing for an appropriation of two hundred million dollars. "I will tell you," said this female wowser, "how you may know when we have a man in public life who really believes in the law and wants to see it enforced—the very first man! When some day a legislator has the courage to rise up and accept that challenge; to say: 'I vote for two hundred millions, because I know it will cost that, and it will pay the sum ten times over, in the form of increased production, and moral benefit to taxpayers and government.' "

XIII

Maggie May explained that she was appealing to the women, and to the new generation which was not yet corrupted. She was calling for a crusade, in the old style; she wanted to revive the old war-cries, and put the fear of God into the hearts of the politicians. "I picture them all," said Maggie May, "on their knees with their ears to the ground, listening to what the folks back home are saying

about prohibition. Will the people stand for having the country sold out to the bootlegger, the gangster, and the killer with the machine-gun? Build a fire close to the trouser-seats of those kneeling politicians! Teach them that the conscience of the American people is not dead, but only sleeping; that our moral forces are not petrified, nor turned to gold!"

The speaker called for a crusade; and the audience cried out: "Lead us! Lead us!" She bade them think carefully, be sure they meant it. "It may be that we cannot do this job through politics. It may be that the power of gangland over our cities can only be broken by direct action. It may be that the speakeasies of New York and Chicago will not be closed, until the women do it with their own hands—or with their own axes!"

A cheer broke forth—such a cheer as startled the pastor of a respectable Congregational church, and caused him to shift uneasily in his seat, wondering if there were newspaper reporters present. But Maggie May, the implacable, went on—knowing what she was saying, having brooded over this idea a long time.

"You know what happened in Kansas, my friends. The saloon was outlawed, but it continued to flourish, until the church women rose up and saw to the closing of it. They tell you that old Carry Nation was crazy; some one has written a book about her, saying plainly that she was crazy. But I ask you, was she crazier than the rich banker whom I know here in New York, who puts up millions of dollars to subsidize rum-smugglers, to spread violence and corruption, and undermine the foundations of that very structure which holds and protects his wealth? Was she crazier than the politicians who think they can bribe the voters of thirty-six of these United States to permit prohibition repeal? Was she crazier than that jazz-band of our New York intellectuals, who chant the glories of intoxication, and idealize the old-time saloon with its swinging doors and brass rail? No, my friends, we are living in a crazy age, and it's time that some of the craziness was on the side of the Lord!"

Sobbing, and applause, and shouting in that audience, the old-time glory-shouting of the old-time temperance movement. Said Maggie May: "I am not saying this because my husband has been shot, and I have gone crazy myself. No, friends, I have thought over it for a long time, I talked it out with my husband before he died. I believe it is coming, another crusade of the women against the Demon Rum. They tell me there are thirty-six thousand speakeasies doing business in New York city tonight—all of them getting

rich out of the sale of death and destruction. They don't worry about the police, they have paid the price to Tammany Hall, whose ideals are those of public plunder and private debauchery. They don't fear the Federal government, because the prohibition administrator has given up, and declared the job of police work beyond his power. But, my friends, mothers were doing police-work, long before there were any uniforms or silver shields. We did police-work on these gangsters when they were only knee-high—until the crooks and bribers took them from our laps, and made them into criminals and murderers. There are wives doing police-work tonight, and sisters and sweethearts—but not efficiently, because they are not organized, they do not act together. I say to you, mothers and wives, sisters and sweethearts of drinking-men—let us organize, and go out as one consecrated band, to break the power of John Barleycorn over our nation!"

They wanted to be organized right then and there. But Maggie May broke down; she wept—and most of the women were sobbing with her, and many of the men as well. Then she got herself together, and went on to set forth her plan of campaign. This one-time demure and silent girl had arrived at a pitch of fanaticism where she no longer believed in the power of the law to overcome her lifelong enemy. Her program for closing the speakeasies was by bands of women storming their doors.

"Remember, my friends, the liquor traffic is outlawed by the Constitution of the United States. There is no legal protection for any of these dens of infamy, nor for anything that is in them—not for their barrels and bottles full of poison, nor for their shining silver and polished mahogany bars, their expensive plate-glass mirrors—nor yet for those magnificent functionaries with broadcloth uniforms and gold braid, who open the doors of limousines and escort society ladies tripping to their doom! From the sailors' dive by the docks to the millionaires' club on Park Avenue—they are outlaws, one and all, and they shiver in their boots when they recall the fact! Remember that under our law every citizen has the right to make an arrest, when he has knowledge of the violation of law—and we women are citizens now, as good as any gangster!"

It was a portent, to witness the fervor of this crowd. If Maggie May had wanted to do it, she could have led a band of singing women out from that church—in spite of protests from a horrified Congregational clergyman. But no, not yet, she said; it was a

matter for education; they must not start such a war until they were ready to carry it through to the end.

"They tell me we shall be mobbed," she said; "the Tammany police will arrest us, the Tammany judges will jail us for breach of the peace. I want to see that, my friends; I am praying to live to see it. Let them give us long sentences—for every day they hold us behind bars will be equal to a hundred temperance meetings. They tell us we shall be beaten up, maybe shot. My friends, they have shot and killed many prohibition agents—I am told that my husband is number sixty-nine on that roll of death. Now I think it is the women's turn. Sixty-nine murders of men haven't troubled the wet newspapers of New York; but oh, my friends, wait until they murder one woman! One church woman, on her knees, praying to Almighty God to save the women and children of America from the Demon Rum! One woman with an axe in her hand, doing no harm to any human being, but smashing bottles and kegs full of poison, meant to break up women's homes, to drive women's husbands and sons and brothers to the grave of the suicide and the lunatic's padded cell! That is the way that gangland in America is going to sign its death warrant—by killing one prohibition woman! Let me offer myself for the honor of that martyrdom!"

There were other would-be martyrs in that gathering, and they stormed and cheered. Maggie May asked for their names and addresses, so that they might have an organization. She was going to tour the country, in a new campaign for a new awakening. She gave them a slogan, which she declared was going to be pasted on signs in front of churches, and spread in the wettest newspapers all the way across the continent:

PROHIBITION HAS NOT FAILED!
PROHIBITION HAS NOT BEEN TRIED!
TRY IT!

THE END